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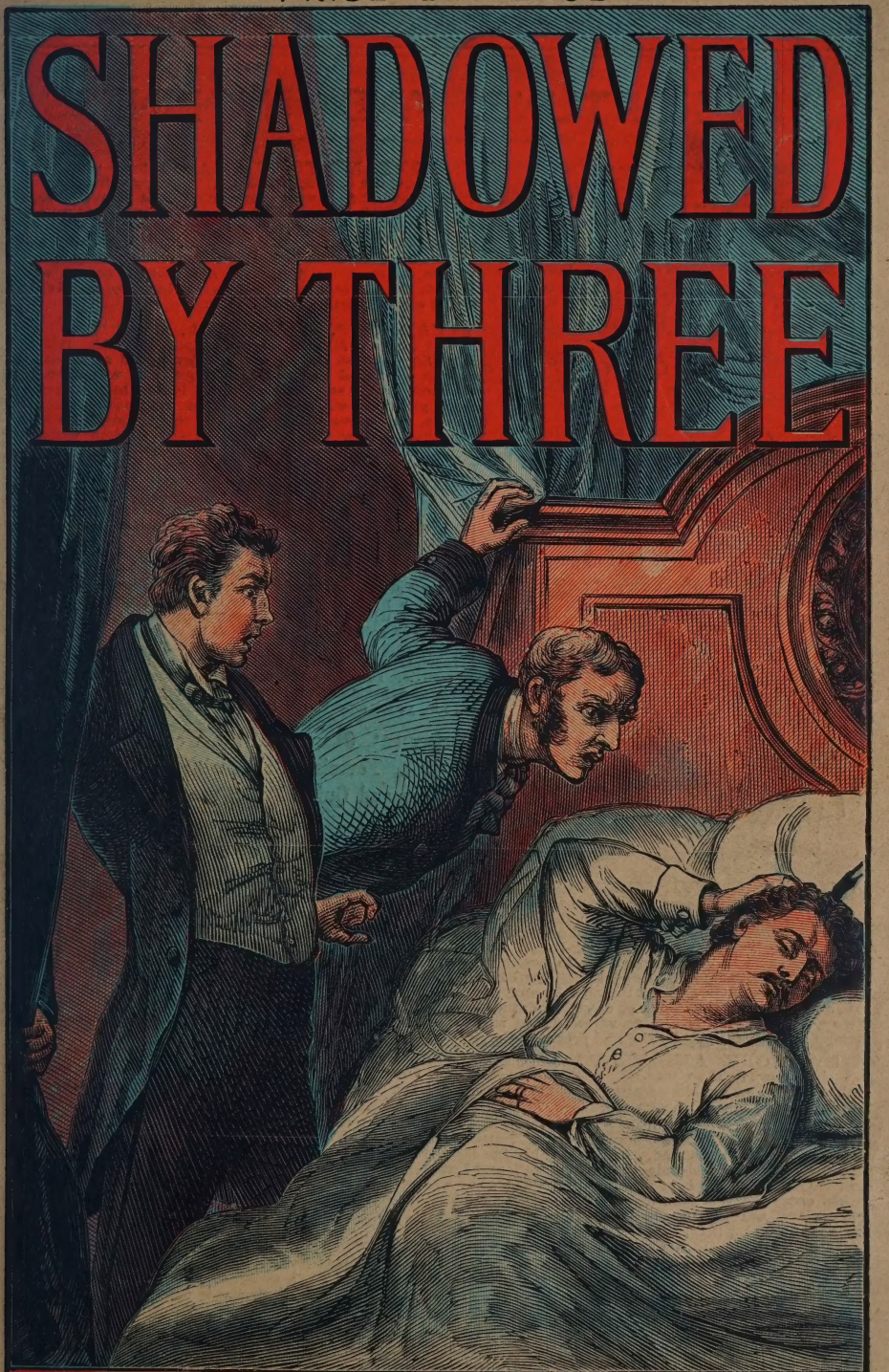

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Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
"Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace."
Tennyson.

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A DETECTIVE STORY

BY

LAWRENCE L. LYNCH

EX-DETECTIVE

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

GLASGOW AND NEW YORK

1887

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CHAPTER I.

OLD FRIENDS, WELL MET.

It was the first day of September, but it might have been the earliest in August, or the latest in July, so fiercely did the sun shine down upon the city pavements, so sultry was the atmosphere, and so eager was the dust to defy sprinklers, and bestow itself, unsolicited, upon ladies' summer bonnets, and gentlemen's unmentionables.

It was only ten o'clock in the morning, and yet the pedestrian, walking down the sunny side of Madison Street, Chicago, on this first day of September, in the year of our Lord 187—, would, undoubtedly, have exclaimed,—had he been a true Chicagoan, —that it was "hot."

At ten o'clock in the morning, aimless promenaders are few upon the thoroughfares; but on this especial occasion, at least one very listless individual might have been seen sauntering slowly down from Clark Street, occasionally stopping to gaze at some window with a half careless, half critical, wholly lazy air.

The loiterer was a young and handsome man. His face, so much of it as might be seen, under the shadow of a big "Kossuth," was much sun-burned; the eyes were large and dark, having, even in a listless mood, a certain quaint expression, that at once stamped the man as an "original." The chin was firm, and the mouth, which might have been handsome, or otherwise, was hidden underneath a heavy moustache of a reddish brown-colour, just one shade lighter than the thick, straight, close-cropped hair.

The young man had the look of an American, a genuine Yankee; but any citizen of Chicago could have told you that his clothes were never made by an American tailor; they had a very foreign look, as if they had been manufactured for some tall English sobersides, and had fallen upon the limbs and shoulders of this big, careless, self-reliant, yet somewhat preoccupied loiterer, by mistake.

Evidently the buildings upon which he gazed were new things to him, for he seemed inclined to criticize some of the most pretentious, and to find some room for dissatisfaction.

Crossing Dearborn Street, with the sublimest disregard for drays and newsboys, he paused before the *Tribune* building, and scanned the structure with considerable interest. Finally he entered at the great door, through which anxious-looking people are constantly hurrying, and, leaning his back against the wall, lost himself for a moment in watching and pondering the evolutions of the famous "advertisement" system. Shabby-looking women, who had advertised for lodgers, or for sewing, presented a lettered ticket, and walked away with a doleful face, and perhaps two or three letters. Flashy-looking men, who had advertised for a "lady correspondent," a "refined housekeeper," or a pretty "amanuensis," and who turned away from the box with a big packet of letters, and a coarse joke, at the expense of the unknown writers; sharp-looking men who wrote "ads." for "partners" and "business chances" and handed them to the clerk, together with the required change, in an off-hand manner, plainly betokening that they knew what they were about, and that it was something worth knowing too.

All these the stranger surveyed, with an amused twinkle of the shrewd dark eyes, and then turning himself about, was suddenly aware that his self-absorption had caused him to commit a blunder; he had turned upon a young lady who was just entering the building, with such force as almost to throw her off her feet. While he was offering a hurried apology, three young men entered the office, and he felt rather than saw that one of them had stopped short and was gazing fixedly at him. Having made his peace with the injured fair one, he turned and confronted

the new-comer. In another instant two hands were outstretched, and the latest arrival was saying in quick cheery tones :

"Rob Jocelyn ! By the powers ! Where on earth did you come from, and where have you been?"

"And where am I going?" supplemented Jocelyn, whose eyes were now dancing with mirth and glad recognition, and whose big brown hand was shaking the smaller whiter one of his friend, with unmistakable warmth. "Glad to see you, Neil, glad to see you—don't ask where I've *been* now,—it makes me sweat to think of it."

"Well, I won't," declared the new-comer, with a mellow half laugh. "And I won't ask where you are going, for, by George, I don't intend to lose sight of you just yet."

"Good enough," cried Jocelyn, with a beaming countenance. "If that's the case, come along ; I have been prancing up and down these hot streets for two long hours, and I want a cigar and a glass of lager in the shade."

The new-comer laughed again as if well accustomed to the odd expressions of his friend, and then lifting his hat to wipe the perspiration off a forehead that was white as a girl's, he turned toward the companions who had entered with him.

"Here you are, Bathurst," said one of them, turning from the clerk's window with a packet of letters in his hand. "Lots of missives from fair ladies ; we will see what we *will* see, now."

Without replying to this somewhat enigmatical speech, the young man addressed as Bathurst turned toward his new found friend and performed the ceremony of introduction.

"Jocelyn, this is Mr. Arteveldt," motioning toward the young man with the letters, "and this," turning toward the other, "is Mr. Fordham."

While they exchanged salutations the keen eyes of the big stranger scrutinized Messrs. Arteveldt and Fordham very closely, and then he said, in a drawling tone, quite different from that in which he had addressed his friend Bathurst,

"Glad to meet you, gentlemen ;" after which he turned to Bathurst and said, in the same tone, "Don't let me come in the way if you are engaged with your friends, Neil ; you can look me up at the Tremont, later, you know."

"Not a bit of it," said Bathurst, briskly, "we only met by chance, as you and I did, and I must have a long talk with you off hand, so come along. Arteveldt will excuse us."

"Oh, certainly," replied young Arteveldt, carelessly ; "it's too deuced hot to have anything special on foot this morning ; in fact I have not had my breakfast. You will be on hand for the North Side to-night, won't you, Bathurst?"

Neil Bathurst hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "No, I think not. Not if Jocelyn is at my disposal. I haven't seen him in three years, Arteveldt, and I don't want to quit him ; he is liable to slip me like an eel. You'll make my excuses to the Ruthvens to-night ; I don't think they will take it amiss, as I am almost a stranger to them."

"Oh ! of course I can fix it with *them*," replied Arteveldt. "But I am sorry you won't be with us, you will miss seeing some deuced nice girls."

Neil Bathurst shrugged one shoulder impatiently.

"I leave the girls to you," he said, half scornfully. "Come then, Jocelyn, right about for somewhere."

He nodded to Arteveldt, lifted his hat to Fordham, and turned away, followed by his friend.

"Which way?" he asked, as they stepped out upon the hot pavement.

"Anywhere," replied Jocelyn, "provided it's cool and they keep good beer. I'm as thirsty as a herring."

"Then what do you say to the 'Gardens ;' they are cool, and the tap is good ; besides, if you want to see any one, man or woman, that's the place to find them?"

"Oh, I am not looking for any one," replied Jocelyn, indifferently, "at least, not for any one I am likely to find in that way. It's all one to me where we go, but let's get *somewhere* quick."

"All right," rejoined Bathurst, with the cheery laugh that seemed habitual to him. "We will go to the 'Tivoli Garden,' it's not far ; why, old man, you *are* a stranger in Chicago ; you have not been here since the fire?"

"No ; and I'll be blamed if it don't seem odd to me, after wandering all over Europe for a few years, to come back to the old city I knew so well, and find it as strange to me as was Greece or Rome. By the way, how long have you been here, Neil, and when did you quit the New York Agency?"

"How do you know that I have 'quit' the Agency?" asked Bathurst, with a side glance at his companion.

"How did I know? Well, that's a question. Didn't I go to the Agency straight, as soon as my feet touched New York bottom, and didn't they tell me that you had left them in spite of themselves,

and were, or they supposed you were, operating in Chicago?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I quit simply because I wanted a change and because I had overworked. I have been knocked on the head with a jemmy, stuck in the ribs with a bowie, and perforated in divers places with bullets since you 'sailed away in a gallant bark,' and neglected your friends for five long years. Eighteen months ago they sent me here to work up a forgery case. It took me three months, and then I sent back my papers, and remained here. I have been figuring, to some extent, as a private gentleman, and that is how you found me in company with that fop, Arteveldt, and his chum. But here's the 'Tivoli,' Rob. Come in, and we will refresh the inner man."

They passed in at the Clark Street entrance, and Jocelyn uttered a half whistle as he dropped into a chair, and looked about him.

"Why!" he exclaimed, giving the table an emphatic tap with his forefinger, "it's a regular German *Bier Garten*, and on a grand scale, too."

"Nevertheless you can buy a Delmonico dinner here, and eat it off this same table."

"And all the pretty girls come here, don't they?" queried Jocelyn, continuing his survey and gazing with considerable interest in the direction of the ladies' *salon*.

"A good many pretty ones do, that's a fact," replied Bathurst, indifferently, "and some deuced ugly ones, too."

"Don't look at them, Neil; don't look at them!" said Jocelyn, with great solemnity; "here comes the beer. Now then."

And he drained off his glass in a twinkling.

"I tell you what, old man," said he, setting down his glass with emphasis, and letting his eyes rove over the groups of ladies scattered about at the tables beyond him. "It won't do to try and compare notes *here;* I shan't be able to stick to my text at all."

"Good Lord, man!" exclaimed the other, "you are not woman mad to that extent."

Jocelyn leaned back in his chair and indulged in an exercise that was something between a laugh and a series of chuckles.

"Well, you know, Neil, I always had a fancy for pretty faces on my own private account."

"No! *did you?*" sarcastically interrupted Bathurst.

"And," pursued Jocelyn, without seeming to notice the interruption, and with a flourish of the hand peculiar to himself, "I like 'em yet! *very* much; but lately I have had another reason for studying the faces of pretty women. Do you hold your old theory about faces?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, you always were a queer fish."

"Thanks," laughed Bathurst, "same to you."

"Oh, I know I have my oddities; at least, that's the general opinion. Well, let's go around to my quarters at the Tremont; we'll order up some good wine —I have 'brought over' some prime cigars —and talk things over. By the way, according to your face theory, how do you make out those chaps we have just left?"

"Who, Arteveldt and Fordham?"

Jocelyn nodded.

"Well, you see, I apply my theory to strangers; these fellows I know pretty well; tell us what you thought of them; you gave them a pretty close quiz."

"Well," said Jocelyn, meditatively, "I should say that your Arteveldt was three parts fool, and the other chap tolerably sharp, pretty conceited, and thoroughly knavish. Ergo, if you were any one else I should wonder what you were doing in such company."

Bathurst laughed carelessly.

"Well, you have hit them off as well as I could have done," he said. "Arteveldt belongs to a very old and highly aristocratic family, is the only son of a widowed mother, and all that—widowed mother lives on the avenue, in a palace, and has a regular bonanza fortune—therefore, of course, Arteveldt is accounted a good fellow by the men, and a great catch by the women; he is too *pretty* to suit my taste, and always has a few love affairs on hand. He is fond of drink and fond of *cards*—too fond of them; he dropped some two thousand, over across the way, only last night; and don't seem much phazed either. The other fellow I don't know so well; he is a newspaper jockey of some sort, always has a 'scheme' on hand, and is Arteveldt's right bower."

"Just so," dryly. "Well, let's drop them and strike out for the Tremont."

Bathurst beckoned to the waiter, settled their small indebtedness, and the two, passing out through the ladies' entrance, turned their faces towards the elegant hotel known as the Tremont.

They had been sworn friends and allies, as well as brother detectives, these two; friends since the very day that had brought Neil Bathurst, then a mere lad, into favourable notice among the operatives of a certain Eastern agency. One of its officers had picked him up, as it were, a runaway

gamin, and had found him so quick-witted, agile, and altogether useful, that he had been retained in the service, and, at the age of fourteen, found himself fully launched as a boy detective.

At that time Rob Jocelyn was a tall young man of twenty-four, and a skilful detective, high in favour among New York officials. From the first he had been much attracted towards the bright youth, and when, three years later, the two were sent to Chicago, to follow up an almost hopeless clue, they became sworn friends, as their work brought them, for the first time, in close, constant companionship.

That was before the great fire, since which Robert Jocelyn had not set foot in Chicago until the very morning on which our story opens.

So successfully did the two operate together, that on their return to Gotham they were once more sent out to work in unison; they spent two years in ferreting out various "absconders" to the Pacific slope, and again returned to headquarters. A year later Robert Jocelyn was despatched to Europe to operate a case in a foreign port, leaving his friend, then a handsome young fellow of twenty, for an indefinite time.

At twenty, Neil Bathurst had been a slender young man, just a little above the medium height, with short cropped curly hair, black as darkness and soft as silk, with dark blue eyes that were capable of as many expressions as the orbs of the veriest coquette, a complexion fair as any girl's, hands white and slender, a firm, red-lipped mouth, shadowed by a small black moustache, and strong, even white teeth, that were somewhat prominent when the lips parted in a smile. This was Neil Bathurst at twenty. Neil Bathurst at twenty-five was a trifle firmer in build, a trifle browner in complexion, and otherwise, outwardly, unchanged.

When they had gained the privacy of Robert Jocelyn's cosy room, the latter turned towards his young friend, and, letting two firm brown hands fall upon his handsome shoulders, surveyed him with a world of honest affection shining from his quaint brown eyes.

"You young dog!" he exclaimed, swaying him gently with those powerful hands. "You villain, I'm gladder to see you than if you were my grandmother, or my Sunday sweetheart! There"—letting him go suddenly—"sit down, sit down; we will see if your face-reading talent can do me any good."

CHAPTER II.

A WOMAN'S EYE.

"I DON'T suppose that you ever wondered at my not writing, seeing that I never did write a personal letter, to your knowledge?" quoth Mr. Jocelyn, stretching out his limbs to their utmost, leaning as far back as possible in his chair and puffing lazily at one of his imported weeds.

"No, I can't truthfully say that I did," answered Bathurst, who was perched, boy fashion, upon the arm of a big chair, looking very wide awake and eager. "My only query was, whether you were dead or alive, and you may wager that there was a commotion among the fellows when it was announced that 'Big Jocelyn' had sent back his resignation from some remote corner of France, and was not coming back for the present. After such confounded splendid work as you had just finished too."

"Well," said Jocelyn, giving an uncommonly strong pull at his cigar, "if you will get off that chair arm, and stop looking so deucedly like a big interrogation point, I will try and make things a little clearer. For be it known, I came to New York just four days ago, fresh from the briny, and I arrived in Chicago this blessed morning for the express purpose of hunting you out."

"Did you, though," queried Bathurst, with an expression, half pathetic, shining in his blue eyes. "But that was good of you—and how lucky that I met you at the 'Tribune.'"

"Yes," laconically; "saved me a hunt in strange places, and I have had about enough of that sort of fun for awhile."

"Well, here we are at all events," said Bathurst, flinging himself at full length upon a sofa and turning his face toward his companion. "I'm all ready to listen, Rob, so blaze away."

"You see," began Jocelyn, in a more subdued tone than he had yet used, "I think the very nature of our business makes everything tame after awhile, and I was at best fond of change, and new ground to work over, so when I found my seaport affair winding up so grandly, I began to reflect that I had not begun to see Europe yet, and to look about me for an excuse for remaining longer on the other side of the big pond. Owing to the very nature of my business, I had kept away from Scotland Yard, but I now began to meditate paying a visit to our English contemporaries."

"Yes," put in Neil, eagerly.

"And, in fact, I did visit them eventually."

Neil suddenly reared himself upon his elbow.

"Did you see that fine fellow, Ferrars?" he asked, eagerly.

"No, I didn't."

Neil dropped back with a regretful sigh.

"I'm sorry," he murmured, plaintively; "I never heard of a braver Englishman. I want to know more of him."

"You unearthly enthusiast," said Jocelyn, smiling benignly across at him. "No, I did not see Ferrars, for a good reason. Ferrars was not in London; he was not in England, and nobody knew just *where* he *was;* he had been working some private case and had been dealing directly with his employer. They had not had a report from him for months, that was three years ago. Well, I did not need any assistance from English detectives, and I was just Yankee enough to be glad of it. To abbreviate—at about the time when I sent home my last report and found my occupation gone, something occurred that stirred up all the police of London and curdled the blood of the phlegmatic citizens. Of course you heard of it at the time. It was the murder of that old Jew, and his still older sister, by his young wife."

"Yes, I remember something of the event, and that there was a large reward offered by the Crown. Did they ever find her?"

"I should rather think not. My boy, I have ransacked all England, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Corsica, and the uttermost parts of the earth; I have searched three years for that woman, and for once in his life Rob Jocelyn has found his match."

Neil made no comment, but the intensity of his gaze betokened his eager interest.

"The old man was a member of a very strong and wealthy secret order of Jews, and they doubled the reward offered by the Queen. Well, to make a long story short, I negotiated with them. Of course they wanted Ferrars, but as he was out of the question, and my credentials were good, they finally decided to let me handle the case for them; I was to have my expenses, in any case, and two thousand pounds if I succeeded; that is to say, the Jews would bear my expenses, and if I found the woman I would receive one thou' from the Crown—you see the murdered man left a large estate to the Crown—and one from the Jews. I was satisfied with this, for I wanted to see all these countries, and could afford to squander a year or two in this way. So we struck a bargain, and I have been a wandering Jew ever since."

"And your case?"

"Is still a mystery; I can't find the woman."

"Nor any clue?"

"Nor any clue."

"What had you to begin with, Rob?"

"That's the queerest part of it; I had—only one eye."

"Only *what?*"

"Only one eye, Neil, one painted eye," said Jocelyn, beginning to take things from his pocket with great rapidity. "My boy, there was not one trace of that woman after she had committed the deed; she may have ridden away on a broomstick, for aught I or any one could find out to the contrary. I could not even get an accurate description of her. As for the picture—well, as I said before, I got one eye." He had been searching through a small pocketbook, and now produced something carefully folded away in oil silk, which he removed rapidly, and then leaning forward placed in the hand of the astonished Neil a bit of canvas, evidently cut from a picture, a painted human eye.

"Think of it, Neil!" he said, as Bathurst gazed intently upon that one dismembered organ of vision. "How can a man hope to outwit a woman of barely eighteen, who, with her hand yet red with the blood of her victims, can think so far that she will stop her flight to cut and slash the tell-tale picture, which, if left intact, might have brought her to justice long ago? Bah! it only strengthens my belief in the superfine cunning and viciousness of a vicious woman. Men may be good, bad, and indifferent, but *women!* by the Lord, they are either angels or devils." Then with a sudden drop of the voice, "What do you think of that eye?"

"Why, I think as a clue it's vague," replied Neil, with his own orbs still fixed upon it. "You can't tell by this if it were black or grey."

"True, and no one *could* tell if it were black or grey."

"It's a handsome eye," pursued Bathurst, "the eye of a passionate, fearless woman, I should think. Tell me all the points you have, Rob. By George, I feel uncommonly interested!"

"Well, my inquiries only served to convince me that she is the very evil one. First: I gathered this general outline: She is below the medium height, *petite* in

fact, and slender almost to fragility; has tiny hands and feet, of course; eyes as you see, for I assured myself that they were both alike; features oval; complexion brunette; mouth small and full lipped; teeth—and here is a possible point—teeth very even, very white, and more prominent than is exactly in accordance with the rules of beauty; nose straight, small, and thin of nostril; hair black and straight as the hair of a young Indian. Then I went in for details, and here I was puzzled. No one knew her intimately, and no two had formed the same opinion of her character, habits, and personal peculiarities. One old woman avowed that she was always scowling, another had never seen a frown on her face; she seemed a sort of human chameleon, and to have persuaded every one that she was of their favourite colour. From a mass of the most contradictory statements that a man ever listened to, I sifted out about this: She *was* a fascinating woman, one of these purring, insinuating, soft-mannered felines. And she had certain odd movements of the head and neck, a mixture of birdlike nodding and serpentine twisting—I should think—peculiar to herself. She had, too, a very soft, childlike voice, and could sing like a mavis. She seemed to have an inborn hunger and thirst for masculine admiration and outside adornments, but there was plainly no lover in the case. Madame Elise Schwartz was in love with no mortal, save herself, when she killed her husband and ran away with all his rare jewels."

"Ah! she did take the jewels."

"She did that. The old fellow was a miser as well as usurer; he had hoarded up a fine lot of rare stones, many of them unredeemed pledges, I presume, and she had nearly twenty-four hours the start when the bodies were discovered."

"And the picture; was there no other fragment? Not a single other feature intact?"

"Intact! well I should say not; why, man, it was in chips, little bits of rags, as if chopped with a hash-knife."

"And you have been wandering all over the world with only one painted eye and a turn of the head for a clue?"

"Exactly."

"And what brought you back to America, Rob?"

"The belief that the thing I failed in over the water may turn out a success on this side."

"You think this cunning sorceress may have sought fresh fields?"

"I think it quite probable."

"Well—so do I. Of what nationality was she, Rob?"

"Nobody knows; she talked the most perfect French and the purest English."

"That makes her coming to America still more probable. Rob, are you working upon any system, or do you intend to pursue every dark-eyed woman with a twist of the neck, until you find the right one?"

Jocelyn arose and stretched himself before he answered.

"Not quite so bad as that, Neil; I *have* a system, and it will yet run down my game. Now let's talk of yourself."

"All right, Rob, but you must let me study this eye a little; it *has* one peculiarity."

"Oh, you have found that out, have you? Well that same eye is photographed upon my mental vision. I should know it anywhere."

"So should I," replied Neil Bathurst, thoughtfully; "at least I think so—if it still wore that peculiar, indefinable expression; the brows are very straight, and the lashes very long. Well, take your eye, Rob, I will call for it again some day, perhaps."

The two friends remained together all day, and visited one of the popular theatres in the evening. They made no further mention of the case that was baffling astute Rob Jocelyn, but when at last he was alone, Neil Bathurst found himself thinking busily of the beautiful murderess, and trying to fancy just how the face belonging to that eye would have looked. But he never once gave a thought to the stupid little social party given by an unpretending North Side family, nor of the "pretty girls," who had been so lauded by young Arteveldt—and yet,—had he but known it—because of that absence from the Ruthvens' little gathering he was soon to find himself beset with difficulties, and groping blindly for a lost link which that evening at the Ruthvens could have supplied.

CHAPTER III.

LENORE.

WHILE Messrs. Jocelyn and Bathurst were discussing their beer at the "Tivoli Garden," a heavily laden passenger and mail train was disgorging itself at the Michigan Central Depôt.

People with anxious faces were hurrying to and fro, others were lounging in listless attitudes, "seeing what they could see," or waiting for expected friends, or—vic-

tims. Streams of passengers were hurrying down the long platforms, and pouring out from the various entrances, and industrious porters and enterprising hackmen were waylaying them after the usual fashion ; runners were crying their various hotels, apple women and pop-corn vendors were clamouring for a hearing. In short, there was the usual scramble and push, the noise and confusion of a monster city depôt.

Into this Babel of tongues and sounds, there stepped—among the last of the passengers—a young lady. She was quite alone, and one glance would have sufficed to assure the observer that she was entering the city for the first time.

She was dressed in an unpretending yet jaunty suit of buff linen, and on her head was perched a hat of coarse white straw with bands of black velvet, one side of the brim drooping over her face, the other turned up and ornamented by a curling ostrich plume which curved defiantly above the crown, giving a piquant look to the fair face beneath it.

It *was* a fair face. Hair of a deep chestnut colour—that would lighten to perfect bronze in the sunlight—was drawn off the forehead, and clinging close to the head in rippling waves, was twisted into a careless knot at the nape of the white neck ; a rounded, but nevertheless firm chin, that had one tiny dimple in it ; mouth small and red, with a beautifully curved upper lip, and a full pouting under one ; teeth small, white, and regular ; nose, neither Roman nor Grecian, but small, slightly *retroussé*, and altogether *piquant ;* eyes that must, in some moods, have seemed oddly at variance with the little nose—large eyes, dark hazel in colour, with strange lights and shadows lurking in their depths ; beautiful eyes, with long dark lashes, and delicately pencilled brows that were almost straight ; a low, broad forehead ; a complexion that was almost colourless, save for the ripe bewitching lips, yet had no unhealthy pallor ; she was small in stature, with plump little hands, dainty feet, and gracefully sloping shoulders.

As she stepped lightly down from the Pullman platform, holding in one little grey-gloved hand a small travelling bag, she paused, and, while others hurried on, gazed about with a look of fearless inquiry. Then she began to move slowly onward in the direction taken by the crowd, casting sharp glances at each lady whom she met, and never once looking at the men.

Finally she stepped in at the open door of the ladies' waiting-room, and looked about her eagerly, then she turned away, looking a trifle disappointed, and quite at a loss what to do next.

At this moment a small figure, clad in navy blue cambric, entered at the upper door, and hurried towards her.

"Oh ! Nora ! " panted she, as she gained the side of the young traveller, and seized her hand. "*Have* you really come ? I'm *so* glad. And I thought I would never get here, for the bridge was turned——"

"Turned ! "

"Yes, turned for the boats, you know."

"To be sure ! What a stupid thing I am. Kate, it's high time I came to the city, don't you think so ? "

"Of course I do," laughed the little lady ; "so come along now. No need to ask how you are, you never looked better."

"Same to you, Katie ; but I did begin to feel like a lost lamb, I assure you, when I did not see you anywhere."

"Well I'm here now, hand over your checks, country girl, we will have your baggage sent straight up, and then take a car."

"Good ! I'm so glad you are not an aristocrat who rides in a carriage ; that would not be *quite* a novelty, but—this will be my first ride in a street car."

"The idea ! "

"Well ! " laughed the brown-eyed country girl ; "I don't see that it's very absurd, since all of my life that has not been spent at a university, has been passed in a village of a few hundred inhabitants, where my two little rats of ponies, and my basket phaeton, are reckoned very grand, and where the sound of the locomotive is only heard from afar. As they say in the play-bills, 'this is positively my first appearance in any city.' "

"And you won't *disappear* for an age, will you, Nora ? "

Suddenly the laughing eyes became clouded, and the girl thus appealed to turned her face away from her companion to conceal a strange, half-scared expression that rested upon it.

"I don't know, Katie," she finally said in an oddly constrained manner. "Now that I am left alone in the world, I may fancy becoming a feminine wandering Jew ; but," with a little rippling laugh, and suddenly recovering her composure, "I promise, if I ever do disappear, that I will come back and haunt you."

"I think you are the oddest girl I ever saw," said Kate Seaton, half petulantly, as they entered the baggage room and began to negotiate with burly porters for

the conveyance of the luggage of the fair arrival.

Lenore Armyn stood gazing unconsciously up Lake Street, as her friend closed her bargain with an express-man, and gazing, she murmured under her breath,—

"This *is* chaos. I *could* 'disappear' here, I think. It surely must be easy to lose one's self in this great Babel. But oh! I pray Heaven, the necessity for so disappearing may never come."

Are there such things as forewarnings? All day long, and often through the gay evening, that word "disappear" seemed sounding in the ears of Lenore Armyn; and even then, as she stood gazing out on busy Lake Street, the shadow was upon her. The shadow of a fate that was to make her a being doubly accused, doubly hunted, for weeks and months.

At nine o'clock on that same evening Clarence Arteveldt stood ringing at the door of an unpretending "two storey and basement" brick, situated not far from Lincoln Park on the "north side" of the city.

He was speedily admitted by a tidy housemaid, for Mr. Charles Ruthven, the master of the house, was only a book-keeper in a down-town wholesale house, who, upon a salary of two thousand a year, supported a wife and sister-in-law, not to mention a small Ruthven, and at present, a half-sister of his own.

The housemaid and a small bondslave, whose especial duty it was to minister unto the stentorian-lunged young Ruthven before mentioned, comprised his retinue of servants. But the Ruthven parlours were always bright and cheerful, and Mrs. Ruthven was one of those charming informal little hostesses that are the especial delight of society young men, who love to lounge in a friend's parlour, where they can throw off restraint, and feel at home among the pretty women of the little household clique.

The occasion of this present gathering was a double one: first, the arrival of Miss Armyn, the beloved school friend of Mrs. Ruthven's sister, Kate; and second, and of equal interest, the birthday of Mrs. Ruthven herself.

It was not a party—the Ruthvens never gave parties—it was just one of those pleasant, every-evening affairs, where every guest, if a stranger, has ample time to form the acquaintance of every other, so few are the invitations, and where music, cards, social games, and waltzing in the back parlour, form the chief amusements.

When young Arteveldt entered the large front parlour, he found himself the latest of the guests. There was a little group assembled around the piano, another gathered about little Mrs. Ruthven, apparently bent upon devising some new scheme for the amusement of the company; a third indulging in what seemed a very lively game of cards; and last and farthest away, Miss Lenore Armyn, seated opposite a grave-looking young man, and fighting her way inch by inch through a game of chess.

Seeing his entrance Mrs. Ruthven hastened to welcome him, and by this means dispersed her little knot of conspirators. Almost at the same instant Kate Seaton deserted the group of music lovers and came to his side.

During the light and ordinary exchange of civilities which ensued, and while, later, he was exchanging badinage with the young people at the piano, Clarence Arteveldt was noting carefully the faces of the few ladies of the party who were strangers to him.

At last he singled out Miss Armyn as the especial object of attention, and leaning lazily upon the piano, gradually dropped out of the conversation going on about him.

"Ah, I have caught you, sir," cried Miss Seaton, moving nearer him. "You are looking at my friend, Miss Armyn, and you have not been introduced. Come," laying a light hand upon his arm.

But the young man drew back, saying, as he looked down at the frank face upturned to his, with one of his irresistible smiles,

"Not yet, Miss Seaton; don't be in such haste to get me off your hands; your friend is playing chess; see how intent she is. If you should present me now, she would not know me from one of her pawns when the game is done; besides——"

"Oh! besides *what*, sir?"

"Besides"—with a half laugh, as he turned away from the piano and led her towards a *tête-à-tête* in the bay window—"I would rather talk with you; sit down here and let us gossip. You shall tell me about the ladies I don't know, and I will make awful comments."

"I dare say you will," laughed Kate Seaton, not at all averse to a chat with this handsome young fellow, with the weak reputation and strong financial vouchers. "Well, sir, whom shall we dissect first?"

"Why, your dearest friend, of course," laughed the young man; "that is the way all gossips do, is it not?"

"Just as if you did not know that Lenore Armyn is my very dearest friend. You artful fellow!"

"Is she?" carelessly. "Then you can introduce her at a distance. Who is Miss Armyn?"

"My dearest friend, I tell you. My most intimate school friend."

"Oh!" in a tone of covert sarcasm. "But that is not all you can say about her?"

"I should think not," indignantly; "she is the loveliest, best, bravest, brightest girl in the world."

"Really!" elevating his eyebrows; then with a glance at the young lady in question, "well, she is certainly a beauty, Miss Kate — I don't know about the other qualities."

"Well, I do. I know she is good and I know she is brave, and when you know Lenore Armyn you will not need be told that she is not a fool."

There came a time when Clarence found good reason for recalling these words of Kate Seaton—"When you know Lenore Armyn you will not need be told that she is not a fool."

"She *is* brave," continued Kate, now fairly launched and determined to do her friend justice, "and at school she used to do and say the most independent things; she is a true friend, I can tell you, but—I would not want her for an enemy. I shall not forget how she exposed one of our teachers who had been ill-using some of the younger pupils and committing no end of abominations on the sly. Lenore said never a word until she had found evidence enough to insure her discharge twice over, and then she exposed her in presence of the whole school. And oh, but didn't she talk to her and to the other teachers! Lenore hates deceit."

"Does she?" glancing at the fair absorbed face, bending above the chess-board. "Where is her home—does she reside here?"

"Why, no! she is an orphan and can't exactly be said to have a home now, since her mother's death. Her mother died six months ago."

"Six months! Why, she wears no mourning!" said he, surprised.

"No. It was her mother's wish that Lenore should not wear black. I don't exactly understand why. I never saw Mrs. Armyn."

"Indeed."

"Yes, 'indeed.' Lenore and I were together at school for nearly four years, but I never visited her, nor she me, until now. Mrs. Armyn must have been fond of the country, for she lived in a wee little village away up in Michigan. Lenore spent all her vacations alone with her mother, who was always something of an invalid, and I, of course, passed mine here. We have always been correspondents, and now, since her mother is dead, I hope we shall be companions, for Lenore does not intend to live longer in Fairlie. In fact her mother wished her to sell their home and leave the village."

"A strange mother, I should say."

"So I thought. But Lenore does not want to live there; she has some money and is not compelled to work, but she wants very much to find an occupation."

"Am I to understand that Miss Armyn is paying her first visit to this city?"

"She is paying her first visit to any city."

"Um—m—she looks very self-possessed for a—rustic."

"She *is* self-possessed, it is her nature; but come, the game of chess is at an end, let us go to Lenore."

And they sauntered towards the chess-table where Lenore Armyn now stood, talking lightly with her late opponent, and fingering the chessmen carelessly.

The ceremony of introduction having been performed, Kate Seaton slipped her hand from the arm of young Arteveldt, and turning towards the gentleman who had lately risen from the chess-table, said,—

"Mr. Fenno, those good people about the piano have been waiting for you; they want a tenor and can't sing a quartette without one, so surrender, you are my prisoner."

And laughing lightly she led him away captive.

Left alone, Clarence Arteveldt turned towards the beautiful girl who stood before him quite at ease, and with smiling face. There was nothing to criticize in the manner of this young lady he had just denominated "rustic;" she knew just what to do, and did it with perfect grace; she conversed with a fearless frankness, a raciness, and skill at repartee, which was as refreshing as it was surprising, to this worldly-wise young dandy. She seemed unconscious of either admiration or criticism, and entered into all the gaieties of the evening with a zest and *abandon* most charming.

When the evening was at an end Lenore Armyn gave her hand to Clarence Arteveldt with a smile and a jest, and never dreamed of the shadow he would cast over her young life; while he took his way home mentally vowing her the loveliest girl he had ever met, and little guessing that, because of her, his days were numbered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DURAND ROBBERY.

AT noon, on the day following that of the meeting between the two detectives, Neil Bathurst sat lunching in solitude at his favourite restaurant. He was sipping his coffee in a pre-occupied manner, and, now and then, would knit his brows and seem to forget the viands before him.

"Strange," he muttered to himself. "It's incomprehensible to me! Rob can't have fallen so suddenly upon the trail of his fair murderess, and yet what else can have caused him to quit the Tremont so suddenly? And to leave no word for me! He is on a trail of some sort, of that I am sure; and I wanted his help so much just now."

Just here his meditations were interrupted. A hand fell lightly upon his shoulder, and a familar voice said in his ear,

"Bathurst, old fellow, you are the man I came after, your professional services are wanted; have you finished this?" meaning the luncheon as yet almost untasted.

Neil Bathurst shook off the hand, and looked up rather ungraciously at the speaker.

"Hang it, Arteveldt," he said, impatiently, "what do you want, and why will you persist in talking about my profession?"

Arteveldt dropped down upon the seat nearest Bathurst, and, leaning towards him with his elbows upon the table, said,

"Don't go off at a tangent, Bath.,—you know blamed well that I have not given you away, and don't mean to. None of the boys to whom I have introduced you know that you are not a 'heavy swell.' Some friends of mine have been robbed, and they want a shrewd detective; they sent me for one, and I came straight here in the hopes of finding you, just as I have, only not quite so glum. I have a carriage outside, will you come?"

"If it's a case, of course," replied Neil, rising quickly, and beckoning a waiter. "Bring my bill, Charlie. Arteveldt, I beg your pardon for my rudeness, I have been a little upset this morning."

He paid his score; then they hurried out and were driven rapidly away.

"What is your case?" asked the detective in a low voice, as they rattled over the stone pavement.

"They are family friends," replied Arteveldt, flushing slightly, and unperceived by Bathurst. "Old lady, an intimate friend of my mother's, and all that. Well, the old man is rich as a Jew, and not over-cautious. Yesterday, quite late, he negotiated the sale of some real estate on the West Side, and received in payment something like twenty-five thousand dollars. Well, last night it was stolen, and the thing was done so neatly that they did not discover the loss until a short time ago, when old Durand went to get the money to deposit with his bankers."

"Durand!" repeated Bathurst reflectively, "is that not the name of the heiress Fordham was chaffing you about a few days ago?"

"Well, yes," admitted Arteveldt with an uneasy laugh, that was noted by his companion, "Miss Durand is one of my lady friends, but it's the old gentleman who wants *you*."

"Which means that I am not to cast any languishing glances towards the heiress, eh?" sarcastically.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Clarence Arteveldt, contemptuously, "my affair with Miss Durand is old, and never was serious. You can 'languish' after her as much as you please." Then, with sudden animation, "By the powers, Bathurst, but you should have been with me last night. I met the loveliest girl that Chicago sun ever shone on."

"I should say you had made that statement twenty times in as many months concerning as many ladies."

"Well, I'm in earnest this time."

"But I thought you expected to meet several strange beauties."

"Well! and so I did. There was Mrs. Warren a blonde, pussy-cat sort of a widow, and a Miss Van Something from Washington, but *this* one, Miss Armyn, is fresh from the country, as innocent of city wickedness and folly as a very babe, and as sweet as—as——"

"Your last love at first sight," finished Bathurst, dryly.

"Oh! you may laugh. I am in earnest this time."

"You are in earnest every time," carelessly: "but let us change the subject. How came you on hand at the scene of the robbery?"

"Why—the fact is," with sudden embarrassment, "I had a sort of half engagement with Au—Miss Durand, for last evening, which I quite overlooked in going to the Ruthven blow-out, and I called to make that right."

"Oh! Well, mark my word, Arteveldt; you will yet come to grief because of your too frequent changing of sweethearts."

Without knowing it, Neil Bathurst had uttered a prophecy.

"Bah!" cried Arteveldt, snapping his

fingers at an imaginary Nemesis, "you are a modern raven, but here is Michigan Avenue, and here we are."

At that moment the carriage drew up before a stately residence fronting the lake, and Neil Bathurst followed his guide up a flight of marble steps, through a magnificent vestibule, the door of which swung open at their approach, across a wide hall, and then into a magnificent library, hung with forest green, and rich with volumes of merit in costly bindings, with statuettes and bronzes, antique tables, cavernous, ease-inviting satin and velvet-cushioned chairs, and all that could beautify and adorn the library of a luxury-loving man of wealth.

At a word from Clarence Arteveldt the liveried servant who had ushered them in disappeared, and in a very few moments the rosewood door swung inward and James Durand, the master of the dwelling, appeared upon the threshold.

As he moved towards them, young Arteveldt advanced to meet him, saying,

"Mr. Durand, this is Mr. Neil Bathurst, late of the New York detective force; if any one can help you in this matter, he is the man."

The old gentleman extended his hand to Bathurst, in a hearty manner that won that young man's admiration straightway, and said, kindly,

"Glad to see you, sir; very glad! have heard of your skill in several cases. I will be glad to get your theory on the subject of this robbery."

"Then, sir," said the young detective, bowing respectfully, "will you allow me to examine the receptacle from which the money was taken, as well as the surroundings, before I listen to anything about the case."

"Certainly. The money was taken from a desk in my sleeping room, and that, as well as every door, was closed, and locked again. It was a cunningly-devised robbery, sir."

"See," continued Mr. Durand, as he led the way upstairs, "suppose that they came in at the front, there would be two doors, locked and bolted; then here," throwing open a door leading from the hall on the second floor, "there is the dressing-room door, then the chamber door, and last the triple lock of my desk."

Neil Bathurst paused at the outer door and examined the lock in silence, then he entered the dressing-room, and began a grave scrutiny of its contents. It was richly upholstered in bronze velvet, the two opposite sides being filled by two enormous wardrobe dressing cases, with great mirror doors, and pearl-handled drawers and lower openings. Opposite the entrance door was one leading into the bed-chamber; in the niches on either side this door were laced-draped toilet tables; opposite these, on either side the outer door, were two splendid full-length mirrors; in the centre of the room stood two great dressing chairs, and this was all.

After a brief examination of the dressing cases, the detective turned his attention to the lock of the inner door; then he entered the chamber and carefully scrutinized the desk, examined the windows, to assure himself that they were not accessible; peered behind the hangings and two tall cabinets, to see if there were other doors opening from the room, and then went back to the dressing-room, where Mr. Durand and young Arteveldt were conversing, threw himself down in one of the big chairs, dropped his chin upon his breast, and thought.

After a long silence he lifted up his head and asked, gravely,

"How many servants have you, Mr. Durand?"

"Seven," replied the old gentleman, looking somewhat surprised at the question.

"And members of the family?"

"Myself, wife, daughter, and daughter's companion."

"At what hour did you receive the money from your sale?"

"Early in the evening. At about six o'clock."

"And you locked it away immediately?"

"As soon as my visitor had gone."

"Yes. Where was the business transacted?"

"Downstairs. In the library."

"Who saw you conceal the money?"

"No one."

"Not your wife?"

"No, sir. I was alone in the room."

"And who saw you receive the money?"

"The papers were all drawn up. There were no witnesses."

"Did you mention to any member of your household that you had received this money?"

"Let me see—I did say at the dinner-table—we dine at half-past six—that I had sold the Fulton Street house, and received the money; but not in the presence of any servant, I distinctly remember that."

"Then only your wife and daughter heard the statement?"

"And my daughter's companion."

"Yes," absently; then, after a moment's silence and moving nearer to the old man, "Mr. Durand, if you desire me to find your robber, you must allow me to proceed in my own way."

"Certainly, sir. I do desire you to find the thief, not so much because of the money lost, as from principle. No citizen does his duty who leaves a stone unturned in a case like this. It was no ordinary thief who entered my house last night. Is not that *your* belief?"

"I will scarcely venture an opinion yet," replied Bathurst, with a slight smile. "I have hardly taken a look at the grounds. Do any of the members of your family, or any of your servants know the nature of my business here?"

"I think not, sir. Miss Aura is not yet out of her room, and my wife is quite ill from the fright caused by the idea of a burglar so near her. Mrs. Durand is excessively nervous."

Neil Bathurst took his hat up suddenly, and turned towards the door.

"Then I will leave the house before this visit becomes known; and Mr. Durand, I must impose myself upon you as a *guest* this evening. Can you manage it?"

"Oh, easily! You and Arteveldt can come together."

"Then will you announce to your family that Mr. Arteveldt will come, bringing a friend with him?"

"Certainly, sir," looking puzzled. "But may I ask——"

"Ask no questions now, sir. Let me do my work in my own way. As soon as we are well out of the house, you will please announce to your servants and all of your family, that you are every moment expecting a detective to investigate the robbery."

"But, sir——"

"Within an hour's time a man will come who will wish to go over the entire premises, perhaps to interview every member of your family. Let him do whatever he wishes, and ask him no questions. At six o'clock I will be with you as a guest. You can then assist me by talking of this affair whenever one of your servants happens to be within hearing."

"But you surely don't——"

"Above all, don't confide to your wife or daughter anything that I have said and am saying to you."

"Upon my word," ejaculated Mr. Durand, in undisguised astonishment "I am all in a fog as to your meaning, but I'll follow your directions *to the letter*. For, by my soul, I believe you know what you are about."

"I hope I do, sir," answered the young detective, gravely. "Come, Arteveldt."

And bowing to his employer, he hurried from the house, followed by the silent but admiring young man of pleasure.

In less than half an hour every member of the Durand household was aware that a detective was soon to appear upon the scene, and all were excited, anxious, or curious, according to their various dispositions. Still another half-hour, and a stout, middle-aged, roughly-dressed man stood ringing at the door of the Durand mansion.

Presently downstairs rushed the footman, bursting into the kitchen with the announcement: "The detective has come! he is upstairs now. He is going to examine every door and window in the house!"

"Oh my!" cried the cook, letting fall a big spoon in her consternation. "What *do* he look like?"

"Oh, a biggish man with sandy hair and whiskers. He looks to *me* like a man that drinks."

"La!" said the cook.

"Yes; and I heard him say that he must see all the servants."

"Well, let him," sniffed the housemaid. "I don't s'pose none of us are afraid. *We* didn't steal Mr. Durand's money, goodness knows."

"Didn't you, my girl?" drawled a voice directly behind her. "Well, you don't talk like a dishonest girl."

There was a chorus of little cries, in various keys, from the members of the kitchen cabinet, as they turned their eyes towards the doorway, where stood the detective, smiling benignly on them.

"Of *course* I don't suspect any of *you*," resumed he, coming towards them as he spoke. "But some of you might accidentally help me to a clue, don't you see?"

Then he turned his attention to the fastening of the doors and windows, which he examined with great care.

Next he insisted upon peering into the cellar, the pantries and closets, and, finally, he lounged down in a big splint-bottomed chair, the especial property of the cook, and began talking of the robbery in a pleasant, off-hand, careless fashion, interlarding his discourse with frequent compliments, and comments of an irrelevant nature, calculated to edify his audience, and render them quite at ease.

It would be difficult to tell where the discourse left off and the questioning began; but when, after an hour spent in the kitchen, the free-and-easy detective at last lounged up to the library, where Mr. Durand awaited him, he was in full possession of every idea entertained by the servants below stairs, in relation to the robbery.

"I have done with the servants, Mr. Durand," he said, standing respectfully before the old man. "Now, if you please, I will see your daughter's maid."

Mr. Durand rang the bell immediately, and made no comment.

"Send Miss Aura's maid to me directly, Jacobs," he said to the bowing footman, who promptly appeared.

In a short time the maid, a simpering affected little being with few ideas beyond her calling, entered the room.

A very brief interview seemed to satisfy the detective, and then he said, "Now, if you please, I will see your daughter and her companion."

In obedience to the command of her master, the simpering girl tripped away, and then the detective asked, "How long has this young lady, Miss——"

"Annin," supplied Mr. Durand.

"How long has Miss Annin been in your daughter's employ?"

"She has been with us some two months."

"And—pardon the question, sir—is she a favourite with yourself and Mrs. Durand?"

Mr. Durand hesitated a moment, and a look of annoyance flitted across his face. Then he replied, "Candidly, my wife does *not* like the young lady, although I see nothing to find fault with. If Miss Aura is more content with her society than without it, she should not be unwelcome to me."

The detective made no reply to this speech, and they awaited in silence the appearance of the two young ladies.

They waited so long that at last Mr. Durand arose, and, with a muttered exclamation of impatience, stretched out his hand towards the bell rope.

As he was about to ring, the door suddenly opened, and a young lady entered the room quite hurriedly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, addressing Mr. Durand, and never once glancing at the detective, "I have kept you waiting, but it was because of Miss Durand; she is quite indisposed, and begs that you will excuse her from coming down."

"Indisposed!" cried Mr. Durand, in evident surprise; "this is the first I have heard of it."

The young lady made no answer, but stood respectfully before him as if awaiting his commands.

"I am sorry that Miss Aura is ill, Miss Annin; is it anything serious, do you apprehend?"

"Oh no, sir," replied Miss Annin promptly; and just for one instant there was a queer glimmer in her eye, a glimmer which the detective did not fail to notice. "She will be better by evening, I think; it is a sort of nervous headache."

"Well, well, poor child, another time must do then. You will give this man any information that you can, Miss Annin. He is investigating this robbery, you know."

She bowed her head and then turned to the detective, saying simply,—

"I am at your service, sir."

Miss Annin, the hired companion of Aura Durand, the heiress, was a decided brunette. She was by no means a beauty, and yet one would have paused anywhere to take a second look at Miss Nina Annin. Her nose was too large and too prominent, her forehead too low, and not broad enough; but her eyes were large, dark, and handsome; her teeth white and regular; her hair, dark, glossy, and abundant, was manifestly all her own, and she wore it in a simple and becoming fashion; her head was well shaped and was posed somewhat haughtily upon a slender neck and above gracefully-rounded shoulders. She was below the medium height, neither slender nor plump, just one of those firm, compact little bodies that impress you at once with the idea that the owner thereof has a decided will of her own, and a pretty sure method of making it tell upon others.

All of this the detective comprehended at a glance, and as she turned her eyes full upon him, he was conscious of a vague impression that the face was not quite unfamiliar to him.

After all, he seemed to have little to say to Miss Annin, and the little that he did say seemed to elicit no very satisfactory replies. When he had signified that he had no more to ask, and the young lady had bowed and retired from the room as composedly as she had entered it, he turned towards his employer, saying,

"For the present, Mr. Durand, I have finished my investigations here. If you will now write for me the address of the party who paid you the money last evening I will take my leave."

Mr. Durand silently complied with his request, and then said,

"May I be allowed to ask a few questions, not so much pertaining to this case as to your system?"

The detective bowed.

"Then will you tell me why you have so carefully examined every door and window of the house? Was it in the hope of finding some trace of the robber?"

"Not at all. I wished to assure myself as to the possibility or impossibility of entering your house either by door or window."

"Well?" expectantly.

"I find that your bolts and bars should be burglar-proof; no thief entered last night, either by door or window."

"Why, sir, how about the open street door?"

"The thief may have been secreted before your doors were locked, or even in the daytime,—but—I am not at all convinced of *that;* if such were the case, however, he would naturally leave by the most accessible door; namely, that opening directly upon the street."

"You have questioned my servants and addressed a *few* questions to my wife and Miss Annin; pardon me, but I could not quite see the drift of your conversation —sometimes it seemed a little irrelevant."

"No doubt," dryly.

"Why did you dismiss my daughter's maid, and afterwards her companion, so summarily?"

"Because—there was nothing more to be gained from them."

"Your questions seemed to me quite unimportant."

"They were unimportant. I have been questioning faces, not minds, in my examinations to-day, sir. The mind, the tongue, soon learn to dissemble, to guard a secret well, but the human face is a window. The quivering of a nostril, a chance gleam of the eye, a movement of the hand, or head, can convey to me more meaning than will hundreds of words. For years I have made the human countenance my study, and I have been well repaid."

"And what have you learned from the faces of my servants?"

"That I must look farther before I find a clue to this mysterious burglar. Your servants are honest."

"Then we are at sea again?"

"Not quite, sir; but Mr. Bathurst must take the next step. I will now go."

And without another word this eccentric personage took his leave.

"These detectives are a queer lot," muttered Mr. Durand, as he went thoughtfully up to his wife's sitting-room. "And if I am not mistaken this man has a suspicion after all."

"It's a queer trail to strike," thought the detective, as he walked briskly away from the avenue, "but I will follow it up for all that—the only person in that household who has roused a suspicion in my mind is the rich man's daughter, Miss Aura Durand."

As if undecided where to go, he turned at the corner of State Street, and looked up and down. As he did so, his eye fell upon a man lounging before a confectioner's window, and, seemingly, intent upon counting the cakes within.

"Upon my word," muttered our detective, with a sudden start "here he is!" And he hurried across the street, and was soon within speaking distance of the stranger, who was a tall man with a slouching hang-dog air, a shabby costume, and a head of brick-coloured hair, that fell down almost to his collar. The face was smooth shaven, except for a dab of red beard upon the protruding chin, and was further ornamented by a patch just under the left eye. The nose had a very inflammable look, and a shabby beaver hat worn over one ear completed the *ensemble* of the veriest "bummer" that ever trod the flags of State Street.

There was the usual bustle and hurry upon the street, and having surveyed the lounger to his satisfaction, our detective managed to wedge himself in among the foot-passengers in such a manner that when opposite the red-haired man he was suddenly brought up against him with considerable force.

"What the dev——"

The stranger suddenly checked his wrath as his eye fell upon the detective; and then the two gazed at each other in silence for a moment.

"You couldn't tell me the way to the Tremont House, could you, stranger?" asked the detective, with a comical drawl.

The man thus addressed turned away suddenly, and retreating until his back could be brought in contact with the confectioner's wall—said, with a jerk of the head in that direction, "Maybe I've got the address in my pocket, pardner; come hither and see."

Thus invited, the detective approached and said, in a low, quick tone,

"Rob, old man, I spotted you by accident, didn't set out to run you down. If I am in the way I'll move on."

"You are not in the way, Neil," said the disguised Jocelyn. "I am after a chap who is upstairs now with a lady. Just stand here and talk while I wait—that is if you are not in a hurry on your own account."

"I'm in no hurry now, Rob," replied Bathurst. "I have two good hours before me, and, as usual, am restless while idle from necessity. Lord, man, what a make-up, and you have sacrificed your moustache, too. That's a confounded shame."

"Had to do it," replied Jocelyn indifferently. You see I tumbled up early this morning and came out; almost the first man I saw was a party who must have crossed the water very lately; he is a swell gambler and a rascal of the finest cut. I knew some of his games in London, and am ready to wager that he is here for no good. I've been shadowing him all day

and don't intend to let up until I find out his game."

"All right, Rob, but don't let me lose track of you—I am looking up a queer job myself and may call on you for assistance."

At this moment a man and woman came down the stairs near them, and Neil Bathurst knew by one glance from Rob Jocelyn's eye, that this was the game.

A carriage was standing just below them, the man hurried the woman towards it, assisted her in, lifted his hat gracefully, and turned away; walking swiftly up State Street, while the carriage rolled off in the opposite direction.

Without a word Rob Jocelyn turned his face northwards and walked swaggeringly after the man, while Neil Bathurst sauntered slowly down the street as if following the carriage. Scarcely noting whither his feet turned, after the carriage had whirled out of sight, he paced on, lost in thought.

A crowd of people were gathered upon a corner listening to the lively chatter of some street vendor, and to avoid these he turned down one of those streets of doubtful repute that are so plentiful in Chicago. It was comparatively quiet here, and our hero moved on, still lost in a labyrinth of cogitations.

As he was passing a somewhat showy house before which a carriage was standing, a sudden movement of one of the horses attracted his attention, and looking up quickly, he saw that it was the very carriage which had driven away from the State Street restaurant.

"Ah!" muttered he, "Rob's Englishman is not above the *demi-monde* it seems, and yet the woman *can't* live here. I have got into a bad locality, and will turn back."

He was suiting the action to his word when his steps were arrested by a loud shriek, which seemed to come from the upper rooms of the gaudy house.

He paused, irresolute, until the sound was repeated.

"Help! help!" cried a woman's voice. "Murder! *Murder!* MURDER!"

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE AND A WALLET.

"MURDER!"

The startling cry sounded doubly weird and awful, because of the afternoon sunlight that was bathing the housetops.

But no such thought occurred to Neil Bathurst as he bounded up the steps and gave the door a vigorous push. Contrary to his expectations, it was not locked, and flinging it open, he rushed up the stairs, at the head of which he encountered a group of women, who were huddled together near a door, upon which their horrified eyes were fixed.

Rightly guessing that this was the door of the room from which the cries had come, he hastened towards it, and putting his hand upon the handle, found that it was locked.

The women fell back at his approach, and hearing groans and curses from within, the young man promptly applied his shoulder to the door and exerted all his strength to break the fastening. It was but a flimsy affair, after the fashion of city tenement-house locks, and at the third vigorous push the door yielded.

Entering the room, Neil Bathurst found himself face to face with a man who had evidently turned away from his victim to secure his own safety. Guessing at once that this was the assassin, Bathurst stopped short in the doorway, thus cutting off his retreat.

With a howl of rage and fear, the cornered man sprang to seize a huge dirk-knife that lay upon the floor near his victim, but the detective was too quick for him. With wonderful agility he seized a chair that lay between them, evidently overturned in the affray, and, as the villain stooped to recover the knife he dealt him a sudden blow that laid him prostrate.

Instantly Bathurst was on one knee beside him, at the same time saying, over his shoulder to the frightened women,

"Come in, quick, and attend to the lady—I must secure this man."

Even as he spoke his quick eye rested upon a wallet which lay upon the floor before the bed, half open, and exposing to view a bundle of papers, which seemed to be its only contents.

He had possessed himself of the knife, and assured himself that the man before him was not shamming but actually stunned, and now he arose and turned towards the bed, saying,

"Run for a doctor, some one, and for policemen."

"They are coming, sir," replied the oldest of the women, who now stood beside him.

Bathurst glanced again at the woman; she was living, but evidently bleeding inwardly; he could hear the tramp of policemen on the stairs; there was no time to lose; with the instinct of a true detective he bent down and, unnoticed by any of the

women, secured the wallet, with its contents, thinking, as he did so, of Jocelyn and the foreign gambler.

In less than five minutes the house was alive with people, and the usual scenes attending such occasions ensued. The stunned villain who had struck the foul blow recovered, to find himself in the grasp of two powerful policemen. A doctor soon appeared, and, having promptly cleared the room of all unnecessary occupants, proceeded to examine the victim, and apply such remedies as might serve to lessen pain and keep the feeble life-spark alive.

Having given to the policemen a brief account of the affair, or as much of it as he had taken a part in, and having seen them safely on their way to the station-house with their prisoner, Neil Bathurst re-entered the house and began to look about him. A group of excited women were conversing in low tones in a little room just at the head of the stairs. He ascended slowly, and seeing that the door of the room which held the seemingly dying woman was closed, he approached the group at the opposite end of the hall.

Among the faces turned to him he recognized two as belonging to the women who had been huddled about the door when he had first entered the house, and, after looking from one to the other for a moment, he beckoned the younger of the two to follow him, and went down stairs.

Somewhat reluctantly the girl obeyed him, and presently they stood alone in a little, half-darkened, back parlour.

Neil Bathurst was well aware of the character of the house in which he stood, and he knew therefore how best to approach the girl before him.

Crossing the room he drew back a curtain, letting in a strong light, and then drawing forward a chair, and throwing himself into another opposite, he said, in a matter-of-course tone,

"Sit down there please, and tell me what you know about this affair."

The girl took the seat indicated, and then said, with a coarse laugh,

"You are quite airy in your demands. Why don't you ask some one else for information? Who *are* you, anyway?"

"I ask you because I choose to do so, and if you don't want to answer the same questions in a police court you had better be frank now. I am an officer, and I've had my eye upon this house for some time."

"You—don't mean to arrest me?" faltered the girl.

"Not if you tell me what I want to know and don't lie about it."

"If I tell you the truth may I leave the house unmolested?"

"You may."

"All right," with a look of relief. "Then what do you want to know?"

"Do you know the woman who has been stabbed?"

"Never saw her until she lay there half dead."

"You live in this house?"

"Yes."

"And she comes as a visitor?"

"She came to-day. We were in the parlour—two others and myself. We didn't know when she drove up, we were playing casino at the back of the room."

"Who?"

"Kitty, Annie, and myself."

"All right! go on."

"I don't suppose that the carriage had been standing there two minutes when we noticed it, but the lady was already inside. We knew that a man had been upstairs waiting for some one, for nearly an hour, and we had heard him tramping up and down the room as if he was getting mad."

"Well!"

"Well—as we were talking about the carriage the old lady put her head in the door and said it was half-past four o'clock. She expected callers at half-past four, and that meant that we must get out of the parlour. The girls went down to the dining-room, but I went upstairs——"

"You did?"

"Yes—did you examine the rooms above?"

"No."

"Well, if you do so, you will see that there is a room opening off from the one in front, where the man and woman met. The room is a sort of closet or lumber room for every one in the house. We all put our trunks in it. The old lady keeps her linen there, and there is an old dressing table there too, which has an excellent glass; the window gives a good light, and we often use the table and glass, and dress our hair there. There is a door, as I said, opening into the front room, and a transom over it. Some time ago a pane of glass had been broken in the transom, and so the thing has been filled in on the front side with a gathering of crimson moreen. Well—the occupants of the front room are not likely to know that it is very easy to hear their conversation, if one is in the lumber room, do you see?"

"Yes. Go on."

"Well, I was going out this evening, so I ran up to the trunk room to dress my hair, while there was plenty of daylight. The man was talking very loud when I

entered the room, and they did not hear me open and shut the door."

"I suppose not," dryly. "You listened—well, tell me every word you overheard, and, remember, no exaggerations or false statements. I have seen the woman upstairs before—and you can't lie to me."

"So!" cried the girl, with the air of one who has made a discovery. "You were shadowing her, were you? That's how you were on hand at the right minute."

"Never mind that," replied he, with some impatience. "What did you hear?"

"I can't give you the exact words, but this is it in a nutshell. The two were old partners of some sort, and must have been up to a good many games together. It seems that they had planned to get some money from some victim (an Englishman) who had shown a full purse. The man had found the victim and then sought her services. She had got into the Englishman's good graces, and had promised the man to get possession of his pocket-book this very day and bring it to him. Well, when she produced the pocket-book, it had no money in it, only papers. The man had been drinking, I should think, and he flew into a fearful rage; they both became very angry. She told him that she was glad the scheme had failed, and that she would never do any more dirty work for him. Then I heard him spring at her and say, 'D—— you, I'll have your life then.' There was the sound of a struggle, and then I knew that he had struck her; she screamed and I heard her say, 'You have killed me!' Then I rushed into the hall and cried at the top of my voice, 'Murder! murder! murder!'"

"So it was *you* who cried 'murder!'"

"Yes. Why, bless you, he had stabbed the breath out of her; she could not have screamed so."

"True!"

At this moment the mistress of the house entered the room.

"How is the lady, madam?" asked the detective, rising.

"The chances are even," replied the woman in a hard voice; "she may live, she may die. Are you the man who broke in the door?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then come up and see the woman."

Bathurst rose to follow her, but paused, and, as she passed from the room, laid his hand upon the arm of the girl and whispered,

"Remember, not a whisper as to my business, if you want to be safe yourself; and you had better leave this house to-night."

"Trust me for that," replied the girl. I will be safely away within an hour, and I won't give you away."

Thus assured he hurried out and up the stairs, to find the mistress of the house standing at their head, looking somewhat irate.

"I should think this was no time for trifling with silly girls," said she, testily. "I don't know who you are, but you seem to know how to act promptly. How is this affair to terminate?"

"You have just said—in life, or death."

"I don't mean that; how will it affect *me?*"

"Not much, I should fancy," with covert sarcasm.

"Not much, indeed; my reputation in this quarter is ruined."

"That's a pity."

"Well, I won't stay here long—and what is to be done with this woman! *I* can't keep her on my hands—she must go to the hospital."

Without making a reply to this unfeeling speech, Bathurst turned on his heel and entered the front room.

Before the bed stood the doctor and one woman, evidently a neighbour; he approached, and, standing beside them, looked down upon the injured woman.

It was not a young face. Evidently the woman had passed her thirtieth year, but, in health, it must have been a handsome face even yet. She might have been a weak woman, but she did not *look* like a wicked one. She was well, but not expensively, dressed; and on the third finger of the slender left hand she wore a plain gold ring, that looked as if it had not been removed for years, so firmly did it seem embedded in the flesh of the small finger.

For a few moments they talked of the woman and her chances for life or death. Then the detective asked,

"Will it lessen her chances for life to remove her to the nearest hospital, doctor?"

"If she lives beyond to-morrow," replied the doctor, gravely, "she will be better off there than here."

"She won't get any too good care *here*," said the woman, who seemed a kindly disposed, officious person.

"Can't you look after her until to-morrow?" asked Bathurst.

"Well—yes, I might."

"Then I will see that you are not the loser by it."

Thus encouraged, the woman declared herself ready to undertake the charge.

Bathurst was assured that the physician was all that could be desired, and, feeling that the patient was in good hands, he turned his face homeward.

More than an hour had passed since he had first entered the house, and he felt as he hurried on that he would be late in keeping his appointment with Arteveldt, at the Durand mansion. The day had been warm and his disguise was somewhat burdensome.

When at last he reached his own rooms he threw off the paddings that had given him an appearance of stoutness, and the wig and beard that had, together with various pigments and little brushes, transformed him into a middle-aged man, and heaved a sigh of relief.

"I am getting into business again with a vengeance," he muttered as he commenced a hurried toilet. "I would like to look into the contents of that wallet for Rob's sake—but it can't be done to-night. I must now cultivate the friendship of Miss Aura Durand."

At that moment there came a sounding rap at his door, and in another instant Clarence Arteveldt in full evening costume stood before him.

"Hurry up, Bath.," he cried impatiently. "Old Durand has sent a message to the house desiring us to come in time for dinner. I have been here twice before and found the door fast locked."

CHAPTER VI.

AURA DURAND.

NEIL BATHURST was busily thinking, the while he arrayed himself for the evening, that was to be an admixture of pleasure and business. But when he finally interrupted the flow of Arteveldt's small talk with a carelessly spoken question, not even the keenest observer would have suspected him of having a care more important than the careful adjustment of his lavender tie.

"So you are really smitten with that little country girl?" he said, arranging the knot of the aforementioned tie with much apparent care. "Miss—— what did you call her name?"

"Miss Armyn," enthusiastically. "Yes, Bath., I *am* smitten—and it may be as well that my engagement with you and old Durand keeps me from making an idiot of myself by rushing over to the North Side again to-night."

Bathurst laughed good-naturedly.

"You omit to mention Miss Durand," he said. "You did not find her unforgiving, did you, when you called in the morning with your pretty excuse?"

"I did not find her at all," replied Arteveldt, with a grimace. "She sent down that blessed companion of hers, with an excuse for *me*—she was 'indisposed' to see me."

"Not well, eh?"

"Don't know whether she was *well* or not; she said she was indisposed, and begged to be excused."

Neil Bathurst brushed his coat in tranquil silence.

"I say, Bath.," broke out Arteveldt after a moment's pause, "did you send around a man to look over the Durand premises?"

"Certainly; always keep my word about these things. So Miss Durand has a companion, eh? Is she pretty and young?"

Arteveldt shrugged his shoulders.

"She is young—and attractive; you couldn't exactly call her *pretty*."

"Oh! she makes up for lack of positive beauty by dash and style?"

"No; Miss Annin is a reserved girl—nothing dashing there; she certainly has good style, though." Then with an impatient movement of the head, "Hang it, man, why have you not availed yourself of some of my invitations to come and be introduced to these girls. It's a deuce of a bore to be trying to tell a fellow how a girl looks."

"Especially when you are thinking about the 'looks' of another girl," laughed Bathurst. "Well, come along, Arteveldt, I am ready to go and inspect these two fair damsels on my own account. Are you sure that you have never mentioned my name in connection with my business, to the young ladies?"

"Of course I am! Do you suppose I have forgotten the turn you did me in Boston, two years ago, or nearly that? I never *blow*, except when I am drunk, and not then unless the party is under my eyes; and I'm not likely to get drunk to-night."

"Nor ever, I should think, after your Boston experience," replied Bathurst, dryly.

"Well, I don't know about that; as Dick Swiveller would say, the 'Rosy' has many charms for fellows like me," replied the other, carelessly. "All ready, are you? Come along, then, we shall be late at the 'Mansion' as it is."

They hurried out of the building, sprang into a waiting hack, and drove rapidly away.

There was little affinity between the two young men; and their present intimacy was hardly of Neil Bathurst's seeking. Two years previous, while employed in shadowing a party of gamblers and confidence men, in the good city of Boston, the young detective had rescued Clarence Arteveldt from their clutches.

Arteveldt was visiting the "Hub," for the first time, and in seeing the sights had fallen in with the gang of villains; already they had fleeced him out of much money, and, having enticed him into one of the very worst quarters of the city, were about to complete their work, by robbing him systematically of watch and jewels, of which he wore some valuable ones. They had made him blind and stupid with drugged liquor, and would have found him an easy victim. But, suddenly Neil Bathurst came down upon them with a sufficient force to capture the entire gang, and rescue young Arteveldt. Bathurst took charge of the young man, his money and valuables, and, when at last the effects of the drugging had passed away, sent him home intact, and with some excellent advice—which, of course, the young spendthrift did *not* follow.

But, while Clarence Arteveldt forgot the advice, he remembered the man; and when, some months later, he encountered his benefactor in the streets of Chicago, he pounced upon him forthwith, dragged him home to the Arteveldt mansion, introduced him to his mother, and declared his resolution to be the young detective's "host and right bower," during his stay in the Lakeside city.

This arrangement, however, scarcely suited Neil Bathurst. He accepted the hospitality of the Arteveldts for a short time, because there seemed no alternative, but Clarence Arteveldt, the darling of the boudoir, was hardly a congenial companion for the young man who abhorred insipidity, and whose life had been too full of adventure and peril to enable him to enjoy the trifling amusements and safe excitements that made up the sum of existence for the young man of indolent habits and bounteous wealth.

So he broke away from the Arteveldt thraldom to the extent of establishing himself in a suite of bachelor apartments on Dearborn Street, and kept quietly out of young Arteveldt's way whenever he had anything practical to employ his time.

Not that he was not fond of gaiety and the society of the fair sex. He loved both, provided they were of the right quality. But he found the one extreme of dinners *en règle*, in stately dining-rooms—where he invariably found himself slipping off from morocco-covered dining-room chairs, owing to the upholsterers' reckless disregard for the centre of gravity, or, later *tête-à-têtes* with stately, much furbelowed damsels, in stiff back parlours, where the same slipping process was repeated, with only the variation of a smaller and still more provoking chair, with a satin instead of a morocco surface—and the other extreme, of suppers, *en passant*, at questionable, down-town restaurants, and the society of champagne drinking, slang-talking maidens of another class were equally distasteful to him.

The first he pronounced stupid, the last vulgar.

It chanced that during the time of his stay beneath the Arteveldt roof, Miss Aura Durand had been absent from the city, and as he had invariably declined all invitations to make her acquaintance since, Neil Bathurst was inwardly wondering what sort of young lady Miss Durand would prove herself to be.

"That was a queer suspicion of mine," he thought, as they rolled towards the Durand dwelling, "if it *was* a suspicion—and yet, stranger notions than that have led to the discovery of greater crimes. If what I have heard from that scamp Fordham be true, the young lady is really fond of this scapegrace beside me; in which case she was, probably, in the sulks this morning; after a charming fashion women have, when they fancy themselves aggrieved." And so thinking, Neil Bathurst arrived for the third time that day at the door of James Durand's splendid home.

Meantime, the heiress of the Durand wealth was standing before a magnificent mirror in her beautiful dressing-room, surveying with satisfied countenance her own reflected image. And this is what she saw.

A girl, small of stature, and apparently about twenty years of age. She was plump; cavillers might have called her a trifle too plump for her height, and yet, looking upon the rounded, baby-like shoulders, and the arms so full and tapering, with the dimples in elbow and wrist, one could scarcely wish her *embonpoint* less.

The head, rising above a full, white throat, was covered with an abundance of blonde hair, that lighted up to pale gold under the glare of the gaslight; it was short above the white brow, falling in crinkling waves almost to the delicately arched eyebrows, thus concealing the forehead, or nearly so, while the remainder was drawn carelessly back from the face, and dressed, low upon the neck, in braids and loose curls.

The eyes were strangely in contrast with the hair, being of intense darkness, the sort of eyes that, without really being black, are always called so; and justly too, when fringed by dark lashes, and shadowed by jetty brows. In the matter of brow and eyelash, Miss Durand's eyes were certainly defective, for the former were too thin, while the latter were likewise thin, and too short to be pretty, or to shadow the otherwise lovely eyes effectively. The nose was small and straight, the mouth rosy and smiling; but here again the caviller might have found fault—the teeth were white, even, and small, *too* small, for when the face was in repose the corners of the mouth had a compressed look, as if its fair owner were forcibly keeping back a secret. The complexion can be best and easiest described by the stock phrase, "Lilies and roses," simply perfection; and as no mortal, whether male or female, had ever seen the lilies darken, or the roses cease to glow, it were unfair to suppose that their bloom was not the gift of nature.

This was Miss Aura Durand, as she stood before her mirror, arrayed in a becoming garment, composed of wonderful shades of green.

At first, one might have considered it strange that she should have so decided a taste for green of every shade—her dressing-room was hung with sea-green, her boudoir might have been the home of a Naiad, and her chamber, with its white canopied bed, had the appearance of a snowy tent in a shadowy forest; but when one considered how remarkably becoming was the colour to the mistress of all that green richness, they ceased to wonder, but never to admire.

"Your recreant knight, and his friend, have arrived, Miss Durand," said a mocking voice at her elbow, and, turning, Aura met the cool gaze of Miss Annin.

"Plain black and scarlet fuchsias," exclaimed the heiress, glancing critically at her companion's toilet. "You certainly look well, Nina, but I don't see why you will affect such rigid simplicity, as the expense of your wardrobe does not affect *your* purse."

"Because I am no fool, Miss Durand," snapped the companion, ungraciously. "I don't choose to incur remark by dressing like an heiress—if I *do* finger the purse of one; my silk is as *rich* as yours, if it *is* plain, and I fancy I know what does and does not become me," with an approving glance at the scarlet fuchsias in her bodice.

Aura Durand turned away from the mirror tranquilly, seeming not to have noticed the disrespect in the tone of her companion.

"Dress is not to the point," continued Nina Annin, with less asperity. "Do you know who the friend is who is here with Clarence Arteveldt?"

"Certainly," flicking off an imaginary speck of dust with the daintiest of handkerchiefs. "It is Mr. Bathurst, who visited at the Arteveldts while I was in New York."

"Then you didn't happen to hear in New York who Mr. Bathurst is?" ironically.

"Who he is?"

"*What* he is, then."

"Bah!" cried Miss Durand, with a shrug of her pretty left shoulder, "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Then I'll enlighten you. Mr. Bathurst, the dear friend of Clarence Arteveldt, is a *detective*."

Aura Durand was standing at a dressing table with her back to the girl who made this sudden announcement; for one moment she stood motionless and silent, then she turned swiftly to face her companion, with a scornful smile upon her lips.

"How dramatic you are!" she said, coolly. "How do you know that he is a —a detective?"

"No matter! I *do* know it."

"Don't add mystery to your dramatic effort; it's unnecessary with me. *How* do you know?"

"Oh, I can tell you," said Miss Annin, flinging herself down upon an ottoman, and bending to examine the toe of her dainty boot. "I went into the drawing-room this morning to look for a letter I had dropped somewhere—and as the room was darkened I let in a little light to aid my search. As I stood at the window I saw Clarence come up the steps, and behind him this detective Bathurst."

"Well?" impatiently.

"Well! I know him for a detective in this way. When I was playing at a certain theatre in New York, once upon a time, this identical man arrested one of our best ladies, took her off the stage in all her gauze and spangles, and when one of the ballet girls, struck by his handsome face, asked who he was, the manager said, 'That is one of the ablest detectives I ever heard of. I verily believe he would hunt down a shadow; *he has never been known to fail.*'"

Miss Annin paused, and looked up to note the effect of her words. But Miss Durand's next remark was hardly what she had expected. "You should be careful where you drop your letters," she said

coolly. "And it must have been uncomfortable for that young woman to be taken to the lock-up in her stage clothes." Then, as if the idea had suddenly occurred to her, "You don't suppose he will know you?"

"Hardly; considerable difference in the appearance of Miss Annin, the companion, and 'La Florette,' in pink tights and a shower of spangles, not to mention a wig of the most impossible yellow."

"Then I don't see what all this fuss is about," said Aura, with a positive sneer. "By the way, why didn't you tell me this before?"

"Because I didn't see fit," retorted Nina Annin, rising to her feet. "Are you going down now?"

"Certainly. So this detective is handsome?"

"Very."

Aura Durand turned towards her mirror, once more gazed at the image reflected there, and then, as if satisfied with the view, turned about.

"Come," she said, "let us go down."

When they had reached the hall, she paused suddenly. "Wait a moment," she said, "I have forgotten something."

As she re-entered the dressing-room, Nina Annin glided after, and through the partially-closed door saw Aura take from her dressing-table a small vial, lift it to her lips, and then turn away.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE WALLET CONTAINED.

LATE that night, Neil Bathurst sat alone, pondering over the events of the day and making copious entries in a plethoric note-book.

Rob Jocelyn had often laughed at him "for a garrulous note-maker." But Bathurst had found that his habit of jotting down everything that came into his mind, or under his observation, concerning a suspected party, or those connected with parties or cases coming under his eyes, had often stood him in good stead, and that seeming irrelevancies had been, in truth, most apropos and useful in many cases.

He wrote rapidly, and for a long time. Finally he paused and, turning back the leaves, reviewed his work, to see that no item was omitted.

There was a most minute description of the doings of that day, from the moment when his luncheon had been broken in upon by Clarence Arteveldt, to the time when, having bidden farewell to Aura Durand and the other members of the family, he had turned his back upon Arteveldt, and hastened, alone, to his rooms, at eleven o'clock at night.

His memoranda concerning the incidents and impressions of the evening just passed were charactistic.

Here is an extract:

"Evening, 6.30.

"Landed at door of the robbed mansion precisely in time for dinner, which would have been a heavy affair but for the beauty and vivacity of Miss Aura Durand, and the *nonchalant* grace and general 'interestingness' of her companion, Miss Annin. These are *not* ordinary girls, and form a decided contrast, both in manner and appearance. Doubtless they are aware of this, and of its effectiveness."

Here followed minute descriptions of the two girls, after which he had written:

"I begin to realize the absurdity of suspecting Aura Durand of any connection with the robbery. She is idolized by those old people, they see no faults in her, and I am prone to confess—neither can I—unless—it may be that she is a little too fond of that gay Lothario Arteveldt; and yet, she has lavished not a few of her sweetest smiles upon ungrateful me. I was aware of a few—a *very* few glances that indicated some sort of an understanding—or *mis*understanding between Arteveldt and the heiress. I can't quite make them out, but of one thing I am sure, those two fair young ladies were so ceremoniously sweet to each other that I know there must be some other bond between them than the silken one of love—and yet, why should this be—it looks like another improbability—can it be that I am becoming a maniac on the subject of glances and tones?

"My visit to the Durands to-night may have been a social success, but from a professional standpoint it was *nil*. I am still at sea in regard to the burglary—*was* it a burglary?"

The young detective sat for a time absorbed in thought, then, suddenly rising, and throwing back his hair with a boyish gesture, he muttered:

"Now for the wallet; I wish Rob was here to help me."

He took the wallet from his pocket and placed it upon the table before him.

It was smaller than the ordinary wallet, and of the finest bronzed leather.

"Looks like a piece of foreign extravagance," he muttered. "Silken lined—and—hallo! what's this?"

On the inside leather were the embossed initials J. B. "J. B.," read the young man. "Wonder if these are the initials of the owner."

The wallet contained a number of letters, a couple of pictures, and what appeared to be a collection of addresses, dates, and memoranda.

Putting aside the latter, Bathurst applied himself to the letters. Glancing over the dates of these he perceived that they extended over a number of years. They were all in one hand-writing, evidently that of a woman, a fine clear Italian hand, as unusual as it was beautiful.

They were all addressed to a "Mr. Jason Bradwardine," and nearly all bore foreign post-marks.

The first of these letters, addressed from an obscure German village, were grateful, impulsive, yet guarded little missives, expressing unbounded faith in the person addressed, but full of fear of some unknown person, or thing; they were all brief, and not one of them contained a name or even an initial. They bore no signature whatever.

Arranging them in order, the earliest dates uppermost, Neil Bathurst began their pernsal.

"*Kindest of friends,*" so ran the first letter.

From this little foreign hamlet, seeming to me to be out of the world, I address you. Again and again I give you my poor thanks for your kindness to most miserable me. What could I have done without you? How escaped from the cruelty and persecution, the ignominy and utter horror that surrounded me? I owe you everything and thank you for all. Thanks to you, my little inheritance is at command. I want for nothing, it will suffice for me and mine. My darling one—all that is left me now—is well, is beautiful; ah! what will she be by-and-by. Some day the tables will be turned; some day *she* may possess the strength I never had.

My letter is addressed in fear and trembling. If it should fall into other hands, *Their* hands!

My friend, I write no more. You have my benediction, my gratitude—all I have to give. I pray to the Virgin to comfort you always. Amen.

In fear, in sorrow, in gratitude, *Yours.*

"Here *is* mystery," quoth the detective. "Let's see—that letter is fifteen years old, as I live."

There were several more letters written in much the same vein, bearing the same post-mark, and dated one and two months apart. Then came one which ran as follows:

Dear friend, kind friend, forgive me that I have not heeded your advice. I can stay here no longer; my days are filled with fear, my nights with vain repinings. I begin to fear *myself;* I have now the opportunity, I *must* embrace it. Once in that foreign land across the ocean, the fear will fall from me, I shall feel myself in a new world, I shall rest. Write no more to me here; when this reaches you I shall be on the ocean. I go with good people who will care for me, and we will be safe. I have promised never to let you lose sight of me, but for this I would say it were best to pass now, out of your life. Best that you should forget me. But my promise I will keep. When I have found a home in that far-off land, you shall hear from me; until then, best of friends, farewell. Once more forgive me, I *could* not stay longer where there is *so much* to fear.

Thus abruptly the letter ended.

"Mysterious but interesting," commented the detective. "Let's see what happens next; wish I had the other side of the correspondence."

Taking up the next letter he resumed his research.

My Friend of Friends:

Six months since last I wrote you. But your goodness is not forgotten. There has been much to prevent writing. First, the search for a place to sit down in and say, "This I will call home;" afterwards sickness that, but for my beautiful comforter, I would have prayed might end in death. Even yet I am not strong. This is a wonderful new land, and we live in a wee, small hamlet in the province—no, the State of *New York.* Everything is new and strange, but my dear one thrives and is happy. Here there is no musical variety of title, no royalty, almost no aristocracy. It is as if one were *citizeness* of the French republic.

I have taken a new name—what an effect *mine*—my *real* one—would have here—address me thus—*Mistress Bourne,* Elm Valley, New York, in the United States. Adieu.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bathurst, "I wonder if he did? 'Mistress Bourne—*in the United States.*' What fun for our Yankee postmasters."

The next letter was in an entirely different vein. Bearing date four months later than the one announcing the safe arrival in a new world, it began as follows:

VILLAIN, BETRAYER—insult to the name of FRIEND:

Know yourself unmasked; know yourself foiled, and that by a weak woman. Did you think that love such as mine ever sleeps? Do you think a *mother's* vigilance ever fails? Bah! I mock at you, for I am transformed. I am a tigress. Stand before me now, and I will plant a dagger in your heart. I *can!* I *will!*

Your emissary has failed. He will return to you empty-handed. Know him for a bungler—a fool. I did not suspect him as *your* tool. I thought him sent by another. What fixes the guilt on *you?* Just a scrap of your own hand-writing discovered by me, no matter how. *You* would steal my child. It can be but for one purpose; do you think I do not know what that is, and why you thirst for that young life? How I loathe myself that I ever called *you* friend. Fool that I was! You plotted like a serpent, you thought to surprise me among strangers; to find me unprepared. As if I had not lived for years in fear and watchfulness. Know you not that habit becomes second nature?

I have no fear in addressing you thus. After to-night this place will know me no more. The last link that binds me to the past is now broken. The woman who has been will be no more.

The future—that future in which you will stand unmasked—rests in stronger hands than mine. Jason Bradwardine, *beware of it!*

"Now, who but a woman would have sent an enemy such a defiance as that?" said Bathurst, as he laid aside this last letter, "and if this man *is* Bradwardine, what a precious fool he is for carrying about such a letter. How completely he must have duped the woman in the outset, and what a female Ishmael she must have been—must still be, if she is yet in existence. Is the man that Rob Jocelyn is shadowing Jason Bradwardine? and if so, is Jason Bradwardine still in search of this woman of mystery and her child?"

Then he picked up the memoranda and examined that, but it was still more unsatisfactory. There were the merest jottings, names of several towns of England and France, together with unexplained dates. Two or three foreign addresses, with only the initials of the names; the name of a church that might have been anywhere. A great many jottings of this sort there were, and Bathurst laid them down with a sigh of weariness.

"They are dry as dust," he said, with a yawn, "and altogether beyond my comprehension to-night. I will let these notes stand over."

He took up the two pictures and contemplated them thoughtfully. One was the face of a woman, young and lovely, a soft Southern face with dusky eyes, and clustering curls above the forehead and about the throat. The other was the picture of a man with a handsome Saxon face, possessing more of beauty than of strength.

The photographs were finished in the same style, and looking at the reverse side of the cards, he found that they were taken by the same artist—probably at the same time—taken in Paris.

"There seems to be considerable of the 'foreign element' about this affair," thought Bathurst, as he carefully replaced letters, pictures, and notes in the wallet. "There appears to have been a wrong somewhere, and perhaps Rob Jocelyn may be on the trail of a criminal. However, if these papers are valuable, I shall find it out. Now for bed. I can trust this part of the matter to 'our wonderful advertising medium.'"

Thoroughly wearied with the day's adventures, he prepared to retire, and had soon forgotten all thought for the morrow in sleep. Early the next morning he was stirring, thoroughly refreshed and ready for whatever might transpire. While still busy with his toilet, a tap on the door announced the newsboy with his morning papers.

"Now to consult the 'ads,'" he said, as, flinging aside his hair brush, he hastily opened the *Tribune*.

If the contents of the wallet were of value, the loser would most likely avail himself of that convenient medium, the morning paper.

"An honest man might put the matter in the hands of the police," so reasoned the detective; "but few men, even though honest, would care to make the manner of the theft public. The chances are that he will advertise, in any case, and from the nature of the 'ad' one may judge as to the value of the documents, and the honesty of the man. If he be acting fairly, I can save him from the blackmailing that would have been inevitable had the papers fallen into the hands of any of those women, and, if I find that Jocelyn has grounds for his suspicions, we may be able to spoil Mr. Bradwardine's little game."

Bathurst had expected to find an advertisement something after this fashion—

"If the person who took a wallet containing papers, etc., from a gentleman, on yesterday afternoon, will return the same to owner, said person will be rewarded, and no questions asked."

Or else a large reward would be offered, if the papers had a money value. Perhaps an appointment would have been made. Perhaps a threat implied.

But no such advertisement appeared in the morning papers, nothing that could be construed into a covert hint. Nothing open or implied, that could possibly be referred to the owner of the lost wallet.

Neil Bathurst pondered for a few moments, and then took up the paper again.

This time he ran his eye over the column of the "wanted." Through all the long list of male wants his eye travelled, and then he commenced a perusal of the column headed "Wanted, Female Help." In a moment his eyes fell upon these words:

WANTED, A FEMALE DETECTIVE, one thoroughly acquainted with the city, and who is not connected with any agency.—Address, V., *Tribune* Office.

"So," laughed the detective. "Is this the long looked-for? If Mr. Bradwardine wants a female detective he is sharper than the common run of swell foreigners. Well, of course, some one will apply." And, whistling softly, he resumed the task of brushing his hair.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEVER REPORTER AND A VEILED FEMALE.

DR. RICE came forth from the questionable house in which lay the wounded woman, who had become an object of interest to Neil Bathurst. As he came briskly down the steps, a young man, faultlessly attired, and wearing immaculate mutton-chop whiskers, approached him.

"Good morning, sir," said this personage. "I presume I am speaking to Doctor Rice?"

"You are," replied the little doctor, somewhat stiffly.

"Pardon my presumption," said the mutton-chop young man, as he adjusted a pair of gold-bowed spectacles. "I am a newspaper man, and, as such, know, by sight at least, a great many of our prominent professional men. This is how I recognized you."

"Ah!" replied the doctor, in a mollified tone, "happy to meet you, sir. Can I serve you in any way?"

"Frankly, sir, you can," replied the young man, in a manner so charmingly respectful that it went straight to the doctor's heart. "In my capacity of reporter, I would like a statement of the case which you have just left—the woman who was stabbed last evening. I knew that from you I would hear nothing save the truth, while the inmates of the house would give a garbled account, if they did not indulge in absolute fiction. Can you spare me a few moments?"

The doctor consulted his timekeeper gravely, and then replied,

"I can give you ten or fifteen minutes. Yes."

"Then may I ask you to step into the nearest restaurant? We can get a glass of wine and a cigar, and talk at ease."

"Certainly," replied the doctor, with beaming countenance; "certainly, sir."

The "nearest restaurant" was just around the corner, and in a few moments the two were seated cosily at a little table with a bottle of wine between them and cigars ready to hand.

After listening to a somewhat tedious statement of the events of the previous evening, the reporter asked, as he made a little entry in his note-book,

"And—how do you find the injured woman this morning?"

"Better; much better."

"There is no clue to her identity, you say, or to the cause of the assault?"

"Nothing definite. The woman who keeps the house says that she believes a girl, who left last night very soon after the stabbing affair took place, could have given some information, as she was in the room next to the one where the thing happened. She also says, that she believes the man who was the first on the scene, the one who rushed in and broke open the door, you remember, is at the bottom of the mystery concerning the sudden departure of the girl. For her going was a surprise to all in the house."

"Ah, indeed! then the affair remains a mystery?" said the reporter. "Doctor, let me fill your glass."

The doctor allowed his glass to be refilled with the unconscious air of a Betsey Prig, as he replied,

"Not *quite*. My patient was able to talk some this morning; was quite excited, in fact; I judged it better to let her talk a very little, as there was evidently something on her mind. From a few disjointed assertions, and by asking questions which she could answer in monosyllables, or by a feeble gesture, we gathered something of her meaning. It seems there was a strife about a pocket-book containing some papers. She signified that the pocket-book was thrown down on the floor near the bed; was lying there when the man struck her, and she fell. She wanted it, but it was not to be found. She does not

think the man took it ; and one of the women declares that she saw the stranger, who was first on the scene, stoop down and pick up something near the bed. His movement was so quick she could not see the object, as she was peeping in at the door, afraid to enter. The sick woman is very anxious about the wallet—but it is not to be found ; who has it is more than I can guess."

"Really!" making an entry in his note-book. "There seems quite a mystery here. Will the woman recover, doctor?"

"I think so. I think—she will. She will be removed to the hospital soon. She signified her wish to be removed this morning. She is not without funds. Mrs. O'Grady, a neighbour, who volunteered to look after her while she stayed in the house, and who seems an honest soul, took charge of a purse which contains considerable money. I think we will take her to the Sisters' Hospital, and the money as well as the woman will be in good hands."

"True, quite true," shutting up and pocketing the note-book as if the business portion of the interview was at an end. "Doctor, I owe you a thousand thanks. Permit me to refill your glass."

The doctor permitted him, and shortly the two men separated with many expressions of politeness and a friendly shake of the hand.

"That's a fine young fellow," mused the doctor, as he watched the spectacled young reporter pass swiftly down the street. "But—why, bless me, if I ever thought to ask his name, or the name of his paper."

That afternoon a boy rang the bell of the house where the wounded woman lay, and asked for Mrs. O'Grady. That good woman appearing speedily, the boy put a note in her hand and sped away. Opening the envelope Mrs. O'Grady found in her hand a crisp ten-dollar bill, and a scrap of paper upon which was scrawled :

"To Mrs. O'Grady, for her care of the lady who was stabbed."

"Humph!" muttered the woman, "I suppose it is from the sandy-haired man what made off with the wallet. Well, *this* is clever of him, anyhow." And pocketing the money she went back to her charge.

At dusk of that same day Rob Jocelyn, still in his disreputable disguise, was lounging within sight of the genteel, private boarding-house which he had ascertained to be the temporary home of the man he had been shadowing for two days. It had not taken the jovial expert long to decide upon the room which was occupied by his quarry, and his eyes were now directed towards the window of the room.

"He is lighting up and closing up things," he muttered. "Acts as if he intended to stay indoors to-night."

As he thus mused, a female form came down the street on the opposite side, and, pausing for a moment, as if peering through the dusk to ascertain if she had found the right number, passed up the steps and rang the bell. As the door opened and the gaslight from the hall lit up the form in the doorway, Jocelyn observed that the visitor was tall, and dressed entirely in black. In another moment the door had closed upon the dark-robed figure, and the detective again turned his eyes towards that upper window. Suddenly he gave a violent start, and exclaimed, under his breath,

"Ah, ha! there she is, in the man's very room, as I live! You should look to your blinds, good sir. Ah! he *is* closing them. All right ; Mr. Jocelyn, here you stay until that tall lady comes out again, if you have to give Morpheus the go-by until two in the morning." And lighting a cigar he moved carelessly up the street for the space of a few yards, when he again halted.

For more than an hour he stood at his post, and then his vigilance was rewarded. The vestibule door swung open, and the dark-robed lady came forth and moved away in the direction whence she came. Swiftly and noiselessly Rob Jocelyn crossed the street, and was soon close in the wake of the veiled woman. For some distance she held to a straight course, and then she abruptly turned a corner, looking back quickly as she did so. Several blocks more were passed, and suddenly the pace of the woman became slower.

"Hang me!" muttered Jocelyn, who sometimes indulged in slang ; "I verily believe my lady is 'fly' enough to suspect my racket. Lord! there she bobs around another corner!"

And around the corner dived Rob Jocelyn in pursuit. On and on went the veiled woman, and on and on went Rob.

"Devil take me," he muttered, "if I don't believe she is going to Bridgeport!"

But she did not go to Bridgeport. As she neared a corner she quickened her pace almost to a run, and disappeared from view.

Striking into a dog-trot Rob rounded the corner in hot pursuit, when, to his astonishment, he ran almost into the arms of the lately-flying fair one, who now stood composedly under the glare of the gaslight streaming from a huge double lamp.

"Sir," said she, putting out a hand as he paused before her, "you have been following me—why?"

"True, madam," answered the ready-witted but perfidious Rob, "I have followed you, but it was out of admiration."

"You flatter me, sir," replied the veiled damsel; "how can you admire one whose face you have never seen?"

"Ah, madam! but your step is grace itself; and now, your voice—ah, what music!"

"Ah, sir!"—her voice broke suddenly, and her form seemed shaken with emotion. She reeled as if about to fall.

Instantly the ready arm of the gallant Rob was extended, and the reeling form was encircled.

Then his ear was smitten by a peal of laughter from an unmistakable tenor throat, and, as the hand of the fair *ignis fatuus* tore away the filmy veil, the voice of Neil Bathurst cried in his ear—

"Sold! old man—*Sold!*"

CHAPTER IX.

MR. AND MRS. ROBBINS.

FOR a moment Rob Jocelyn stood staring, transfixed with astonishment. Then, as the laugh of Neil Bathurst rang out afresh, his countenance suddenly relaxed, and his own voice was lifted in an uproarious burst of merriment.

"Stop, for the Lord's sake, man!" cried Neil, suddenly recovering his gravity; "stop, or we will have all the cops in the neighbourhood down on us!"

"Powers alive!" panted Rob, struggling to subdue his merriment, "how you *have* sold me! Where on earth did you get that trick of the voice, Neil?"

"Let's move on, and I'll tell you," said Bathurst, taking his friend's arm and facing him about. "There now, we look quite proper, and I don't feel so much like a forlorn female. Where did I learn to talk like a woman? Well, Rob, I found that I could 'make myself up,' as theatrical people say, into a very respectable woman, therefore I put myself into the hands of a first-class ventriloquist; and I have found my accomplishment a most valuable one."

"Well, you *do* make a fine figure of a woman," admitted Rob, with a critical glance. "A little too tall to suit *my* taste, but then—— How did you strike the fancy of your fellow up on the avenue?"

"Pretty well, I should think," replied Neil carelessly. "Where do we go, Rob? I *have* led you a deuce of a dance."

"I should think so," grumbled Jocelyn. "My feet are about worn out. I have been on the go almost constantly since yesterday morning. Can't you stand that toggery until morning, Neil?"

"If necessary, yes."

"Well, it is necessary. We can't get a hack in this God-forsaken quarter, and I can't go back to town in an old car. I'm all ready to fall to pieces now. Let's finish the night together—take up our quarters in the nearest hotel, and have a chance for a long chat. You can be my wife, or my grandmother, whichever you please."

"Not at all particular," laughed Neil. "I have nothing especial on hand, and am willing to be your grandmother or anybody for the sake of a comfortable talk with you. There is a little hotel half a block away; come along, and don't forget that I am a lady."

Within fifteen minutes thereafter the two detectives were comfortably established in a shabby-genteel suite of rooms belonging to a third-rate hotel, and the ink was not yet dry where the dirty register bore in sprawling characters the names "Mr. and Mrs. Robbins."

If one could have peered into the room occupied by the two "Robbinses," they might have beheld the rather unusual spectacle of a lady lounging in one chair, with her feet upon a second, and puffing out clouds of smoke from a strong black cigar, while her companion, stretched full length upon a sofa near by, contemplated the performance with perfect satisfaction.

"I say, Mrs. Robbins," queried this latter individual, when, a little later, they sat at supper, which had been served in their rooms, "where did you get the sorrel wig?"

"Sorrel!" sniffed the aggrieved one, scornfully, "it's blonde, you great block-head, strawberry blonde. I'm shocked at your ignorance."

"Oh! is it?" quoth Rob, meekly. "Looks sort of reddish to *me*, but I won't contradict a lady."

"Well, Rob," said the bewigged Bathurst, resuming his natural tone,—"let's send away the supper things and get down to business; I have got some queer things for your ears."

"Clear away it is then. Just pull that cracked bell. Oh, I forgot; I'll do it myself."

When at last the supper was cleared away and the two friends had lighted fresh cigars, Jocelyn said,

"How is it that I find you in this toggery, and running down my quarry, old fellow? Did you ever see him before I piped him yesterday?"

"Never," replied the "old fellow" composedly.

Jocelyn gave a long whistle, and then relapsed into silence and smoke. Several moments were passed thus, and then removing the cigar from between his lips, Neil Bathurst said,

"I'll tell you how I came to call upon our swell friend to-night, Rob; but first, I want you to give me an account of your business with him since yesterday."

"That won't take long," replied Jocelyn, drawing up his chair. "I can't make the fellow out. From State Street he went directly to the Clark Street gambling house."

"*The* gambling house! which one?"

"Well, you know I am not quite up to the names of things here yet. It was on the corner of——"

"Oh! you mean Mike's?"

"Mike's; yes, I remember the name now. Why, it must be the old Mike——"

"Mike McDonald, of course; he ran several smaller places when we were here together."

"Well, no matter,—he, my man, went there, and I was not far behind. He began to play, but was betting light. Pretty soon I worked myself into a game with him. After a little he became more interested in the play. He had been staking some loose money that he pulled all in a crumple from his trousers' pockets. He seemed to have exhausted that resource, and reached for a wallet from his inner breast-pocket. All at once he started and exclaimed,

"'D——me—I've been robbed!'

"'Lost your pocket-book, stranger?' I asked, thinking it was a dodge.

"'No,' he said, looking black as a thunder-cloud, and slapping down a well-filled purse on the table between us, 'worse than that.' Well, he ransacked his pockets, muttering curses all the while, muttering them so low, and between his teeth, I could not catch the form of the words more than to know that he was consigning some person or thing to a very warm place. He paid no attention to anything that was said by the men around him, and I knew that he was too much upset to play any more, so I thought it best to leave ahead of him. In the rummage for the lost article, whatever it was, he dropped his handkerchief on the floor. I could not pick it up without being seen by the others around the table; so as soon as the eyes of the owner were turned away I pocketed it coolly under their very noses. Then I gave them a wink and ordered drinks for the crowd. After which I left as soon as I could."

"Well; and then?"

"Then I had to hang out about ten minutes before my man came down. When he did come he walked straight into the nearest saloon, ordered a schooner of beer or ale, and sat there for nearly an hour without so much as changing his position. I tell you he looked black. Finally he gave himself a sort of a shake, and ordered some more ale. This he drank and then marched straight to the *Tribune* office."

"Exactly."

"As he had seen me, I did not, of course, follow him inside the building, but I lounged near enough to see that he wrote an 'ad.' and handed it in at the clerk's window. After that he walked over to Wabash Avenue, hailed a car, and went south. I jogged after until the thing stopped to take up some more passengers, and then I hung on the tail end and escorted my man to his boarding-house. I waited about until I heard a supper-bell ring, and then, as I knew he would be engaged for a few minutes at least, I made off and snatched a hasty meal at the nearest restaurant. I had not been back at my post five minutes when he sallied out and then began a chase. From seven o'clock until one we went from theatre to theatre, from restaurant to restaurant, stopping in each place just long enough to overlook the guests, and then on to the next. I observed that he visited no places that were not patronized by ladies—and, of course, it did not take me long to figure out the fact that he was looking for some one, and that some one was a woman."

"Did he find her?"

"Not he. He went home at one o'clock, and walked the floor for a full hour, without taking the trouble to close the blinds.'

"And to-day?"

"To-day he kept tolerably cool. He went to the *Tribune* office and got a letter or two, which he answered then and there, and mailed at the post-office. After this he wandered about looking in at shop windows and eyeing all the women. After dinner he stalked about the streets in much the same way, and then went home, took his supper—I suppose—and waited for you. That's all; now give us *your* story."

"Hold on a bit, let's take a look at that handkerchief," said Neil; "you have it with you, of course?"

"Of course," producing it from an inner pocket, and putting it into Neil's hand.

He unfolded it slowly. It was of silk, soft and white; instantly the quick eye of the young detective discovered a bit of fine embroidery in one corner. It was a name

embroidered with woman's hair; a name, and after it an initial. Looking close at it Neil Bathurst read "*Jason B.*" Then he bent towards his companion.

"Old man," he said, gravely, "you did a good thing when you nabbed that handkerchief."

Then, without waiting for a comment from Rob Jocelyn, he related his experiences of the past two days, omitting nothing.

As usual, when deeply interested, and upon his professional mettle, Rob Jocelyn, throwing off his ordinary manner of whimsical carelessness, became grave, silent, and alert. He had listened silently, and when, at the end of his story, Neil Bathurst produced the wallet containing the mysterious letters to Jason Bradwardine, he drew his chair close to the table and examined every document from first to last, without uttering a word.

Bathurst lighted a fresh cigar, and leaning back comfortably, watched his friend's countenance.

When the memoranda had been carefully scanned, and the photographs closely inspected, Jocelyn turned two keen, earnest brown eyes upon his friend; and Neil, who knew well the meaning of that intense look upon the usually *debonnair* face, said,

"I see, Rob, you think we have stumbled upon a strong case."

"I think," replied Rob Jocelyn, with slow gravity, "that this man is Jason Bradwardine, and that Jason Bradwardine needs a *guardian*."

"You think he is here in search of this mysterious mother and child?"

"It is not improbable. Did you look closely at these notes and figures? See, they have been jotted down at different times; there are numerous shades of ink, and a variety in the size of the strokes, indicating that different pens have been used. Here are some entries that have evidently been made while moving, probably written while riding in the cars, or a carriage. Now then, here are some dates with curious marginal notes, or words. Did you look these over very carefully?"

"No; to tell the truth, I did little more than glance at the notes. I was very sleepy, and expected to run them through again with you."

"Why did you not think of comparing some of these dates with the dates of the letters?"

"Why didn't *you* think of connecting our friend Bradwardine with that 'ad.' for a female detective?" retorted Bathurst, with a good-humoured laugh. "Hang it, man, one brain can't hold everything. You and I may possess very good heads, as heads go; but haven't we proved more than once the truth of the old adage?"

"'Two heads better than one,' quite true," replied Jocelyn, gravely. "We have done some hard thinking together, and if you came to go over these papers the second time you would hardly have overlooked this matter of the dates. Let us see. Just refer to that pile of letters, will you? For a test, take that letter of defiance, the last one; what date does it bear?"

"April 7, 18—."

"And here, under my very eye, is the same date; and here another date, some forty days later, most likely to mark the time when the letter was received. This man must have relied much upon his memory. Wait a moment; he sent an emissary, she says in her letter. Well, here, just above the memorandum of April 7, is another; listen: 'Feb. 18th, I. sailed.' What do you make of that? By Jove! 'I.' must be the fellow who came over to steal the child."

"Precisely. Now then, below I find this: 'May 21st, *Failure*.' That means the man's return, eh?"

"It looks like it."

Upon further examination of the letters and notes they found that the latter bore entries corresponding with the dates of the letters, or the times at which they were received. Beyond this, their combined efforts could make nothing out of the memoranda, or notes.

For more than an hour they talked of Jason Bradwardine and his probable intentions and movements. Then Jocelyn said, "Well, Neil, we will work up this case together, as we both have leisure."

"No, Rob," said Bathurst, shaking his head. "This is your case. And you are just the man to see it through. You always were a 'Squire of dames.' The fact is I want to remain in the city. I have got one or two notions in my head. Notions so odd and altogether vague, that I dare not repeat them even to *you*. But I want to stay here awhile, and go in for society. Whenever you really *need* my help I am yours. Bradwardine, or Brady, as he calls himself, having employed me to scour the city in search of this woman, I will be able to keep him under my eye, and can keep you posted during the time you will need for your trip to New York. You can gather up all the Elm Valley news; and feel assured that I in the meantime have not lost my grip of Bradwardine.

When you come back I will turn him over to you."

Jocelyn was somewhat surprised at his friend's sudden resolve to abandon work for pleasure, but knowing that Neil would explain in his own way and time, he forbore to comment, and it was decided that he, Jocelyn, should pay a visit to Elm Valley, there to seek information concerning "Mistress Bourne," while Bathurst, who had replied to the advertisement for a female detective, and had been employed by Bradwardine, who gave his name as Brady, to search the city for one Helen Richards, who had stolen from him, so he said, a wallet containing certain papers entrusted to him by a friend, and which, because they were held in trust for another, he would pay almost any price to recover.

"I will of course keep up my *character* as a widow with a taste for private investigations, and who knows but that in my perambulations about the city I may come upon your beautiful assassin? She of the eye."

"Who knows?" replied Rob; "don't think I have abandoned my search for her. Depend upon it, I shall find that she-devil yet."

"I should like to have a hand in that myself," said Bathurst, little dreaming how closely the fate of the beautiful murderess would be linked with his own.

CHAPTER X.

A TERRIBLE TEMPER.

We must now leave the two detectives for a time, and see how the world is dealing with Lenore Armyn, the orphan girl, who, as a guest of the Ruthvens, was making the acquaintance of the city.

It was no wonderful phœnix to her, for she had never looked upon those other spires and stately walls now crumbled or vanished away.

Before her arrival, the Ruthvens, or such of them as did not know the truth concerning Lenore, had indulged in more than one jest at the expense of the coming "country girl." But there were no more jests at her expense. The Ruthvens could find nothing to criticize in Lenore Armyn.

True, she was childishly ignorant of everything pertaining to the city; but she asked questions with charming affable *naïveté*, and received astonishing information with such perfect composure that her friends could do nothing but admire.

There was no such thing as patronizing Lenore. On the contrary, she bore herself towards those who were about her with a gracious friendliness; while to strangers she extended a courtesy actually haughty. Upon Kate Seaton, her school friend, the girl always lavished a flood of sincerest affection, not unmixed, it must be confessed, with a little, a very little, patronage. But Kate Seaton had been patronized by some one from her cradle up. She was one of those meek, sweet-tempered, lovable girls who never assert their own equality, or superiority, and her sister, Mrs. Ruthven, was of the same sort.

Charles Ruthven was young and gay, fond of society, fond of *fun*, and—a little too fond of the ladies. His half-sister, Mrs. Warren—the lady so graphically described by Clarence Arteveldt as a "blonde pussy-cat widow"—had been but a short time a member of the Ruthven family.

Mrs. Warren was a fleshy blonde, very pretty, and standing upon the border-land of her thirtieth summer. She was well preserved, good-natured, and frivolous—unprincipled, too, in the matter of getting her own way; but, as Mrs. Warren's way was pretty sure to be a pleasant one, no one felt called upon to reproach her for lack of principle.

Mrs. Warren prided herself upon her style and her taste in dress, and had calculated upon overwhelming the country girl with the elegance of her toilets. But Lenore, herself well and tastefully arrayed, was not to be overwhelmed by the fashion as embodied in Mrs. Warren, a fact which that lady was not slow in finding out.

The widow was, in her way, an admirer of her own sex—one of those women who must always have on hand several "dear friends" in whom they may confide, and whose confidences they may betray when the love of gossip is strong upon them. Finding that Lenore was not to be led, Mrs. Warren, who had elected her, at sight, one of her chosen "dear girls," was content to stand on an equal footing—even to submit to be ridiculed sometimes, for the lady afforded a fine target for mirth at times, and Lenore was quick to see absurdities. But her laughter was far from malicious; her sarcasm had in it no sting.

In Lenore Armyn's nature there was one most dangerous element. She was entirely devoid of fear, and was lacking in the worldly wisdom which begets prudence. Among the light-hearted pleasure lovers who constituted the Ruthven family there were none capable of advising Lenore Armyn, and the time was not far distant when the girl would realize this fact. For the present the days were halcyon.

The Ruthvens were fond of society, and scarcely an evening passed that did not bring its little card party, composed of a few of Charlie Ruthven's friends, together with the ladies of the family, and perhaps Miss Van Buren, the Washington young lady, or some other of the female friends of the family.

Mrs. Warren, too, had various admirers, who dropped in occasionally for an evening's chat, or sent the ladies theatre tickets. And Clarence Arteveldt had become almost a fixture on the North Side. Since that first evening passed in the society of Lenore Armyn he had become her shadow. But, while he sought to dazzle Lenore with his wealth, if he could not induce her to fall in love with his "womanishly" handsome face, he was mindful not to pay his court too openly. Accordingly, he planned numerous excursions and pleasure parties, which included the entire Ruthven family, as well as any male friend of the family. There were theatres and drives, steamboat excursions and sails upon the lake, autumn picnics, impromptu suppers, concerts, and lectures—always something; and always Clarence Arteveldt was the leader, the life of the party. At least, he was the leader of the men; for no eye was brighter, no laugh gayer or more frequent, and no repartee more ready and sparkling than that of Lenore Armyn.

It was a new life to the beautiful girl, and she enjoyed it to the full. The home circle was always gay and pleasant; in the daytime there were the parks, the shops, the *matinée;* in the evening some pleasure always fresh. And everywhere was Clarence Arteveldt. Thus passed three long weeks of the lovely September.

One morning Lenore, Kate, and Mrs. Warren—or Jess, as she was usually called—set out for a walk.

"We won't go to the park," said Lenore. "I am tired of it. Let us go down some of those queer Dutch streets, and see the fat women and the babies, and the dogs and cats. Let's see low life for once. Come, girls." And, grumbling a little, but obedient to the stronger will, the two followed Lenore.

Nearly an hour thereafter, as little Mrs. Ruthven sat humming softly and rocking the cradle of the young Ruthven, who steadfastly refused to close his eyes in sleep, the door was flung violently open and Jess Warren, pale and breathless, rushed in.

"Oh!" she cried, clenching her two hands, as she invariably did when very eager or much excited—"Oh! Nett, Nett! Lenore is arrested; a policeman has got her—and Kitty, too, I guess."

Mrs. Ruthven sprang to her feet, almost overturning the baby.

"Jess Warren, what do you mean?" she cried. "Lenore arrested! you are crazy! What for—*tell me?*"

"What for?" screeched Jess; "why, she nearly killed a man, or else killed him quite. She knocked him down, anyway; and she is arrested—*there!*"

For a moment Mrs. Ruthven stood transfixed. Then she flew at Jess, and, shaking her with all her strength, cried out:

"Now, Jess Warren, stop acting like a mad woman; what prank are you trying to play me?"

"I am not playing a prank," whimpered Jess. "Don't you see how scared I am? I tell you it is true."

"What is true?" stamping her slippered foot wrathfully. "Tell me *instantly.*"

"Well, I am going to," cried Jess, beginning to recover herself a little. "You see Lenore dragged us down among all those horrid, nasty-smelling Germans, and at last turned into the awfullest, *awfullest* dirty street you ever saw in your life. We tried to coax her to turn back, but *no*, she was *seeing Chicago*, she said, and she must see all of it. So on we went, and *oh*, how it did smell! When we had got to the nastiest, *meanest*, DIRTIEST place of all, we heard some one screaming, and some one else swearing in awful Dutch. There was a sort of alley-way, and as we came to it there we saw a big man beating a woman with his great, dirty, awful fists. The woman was down on her knees beside a little pile of wood, and a mallet and wedge lay beside the man. Before we could think, Lenore had rushed at the man, screaming, in the *awfullest* way, 'Stop, you beast, you devil; stop, I tell you!' But the man roared out another oath, and struck the woman again so hard that she fell over upon the wood. In an instant Lenore seized that great mallet and struck the man an awful hard blow upon the head. We could hear his skull crack. Oh, Nett, it was *awful.* And there stood Lenore above the man, and you could fairly see the sparks fly out of her eyes. 'Lie there, you brute!' she said, and I thought she would kick him with her boot. By that time a ragged little girl ran up, and at her heels a big, ugly policeman. I saw him go up and take Lenore by the arm, and then I ran away as fast as I could."

Having finished her "awful" story, Mrs. Warren sat down to recover her breath.

"And Kate?" asked Mrs. Ruthven, all in a tremble.

"I tell you, he has got *her* too. Think of it, Nett—Kate and that *awful* Lenore locked up in a police station!"

"Who talks of my being locked up in a police station?" cried a clear, vibrant voice, and simultaneously the door swung open, and Lenore Armyn appeared upon the threshold, with cheeks flaming, eyes blazing, and nostrils quivering. "Is it *you*, Mrs. Warren? Oh, you pitiful coward; you would stand by and see a human being killed by a brute, and then run away and *lie* about one who dared to interfere. Bah! I *despise* you!" And Lenore Armyn turned on her heel and walked straight to her own room.

"Jess, how could you?" said Kate Seaton, who had followed Lenore into the room, looking very pale, but quite collected. "You have made Lenore *so* angry."

"*I* made her angry?" retorted Jess, growing suddenly brave. "I made her knock that man down, I suppose? Heavens! I am afraid to live in the house with Lenore Armyn; she is a fiend incarnate. I shall never forget how she looked. But, of course, you won't say a word against her, not if she kills the whole family some day. It's a pity the policeman *didn't* shut her up!" said the now hysterical Jess.

"If you are afraid to live here you had better change your quarters," said Kate, in a white heat. "Rest assured Lenore will never kill *you;* she doesn't care enough about you, one way or the other."

"*Don't* she?" hissed Jess. "Well, I hope some day to prove more *worthy* her consideration," and she flounced out of the room.

As soon as the door had closed behind her Mrs. Ruthven turned to her sister.

"Kate, what on earth does this all mean? *Did* Lenore Armyn strike a man?"

"Yes, Nettie, she did," replied Kate Seaton, gravely. "She felled him with one blow. He went down like an ox, and he deserved it. But, oh! it was terrible to see Lenore. I never dreamed she could possess such a temper. I have seen her eyes flash, and her hands clench, at the mention of wrong or outrage; she was always the champion of the weak. I have seen her interfere between quarrelling children more than once, and shake a boy as big as herself nearly out of his boots. But nothing like this. Nettie, she was livid to the lips—and her eyes, I shall never forget them. She told the policeman what she had done, and he looked thunderstruck; then, as we saw people coming, he told her she had served the brute right, but that she had better go home as quick as possible. 'I wouldn't arrest you if you had killed him,' he said; 'but some one else might if you stayed.' Then I wanted her to run, but she would not; of course I would not leave her, and she walked along *so* steadily all the way, but with that dreadful look of anger on her face. Nettie, I would not wrong Lenore Armyn for the world. If any man ever does *she will murder him!*"

CHAPTER XI.

SETTING THE SNARE.

LENORE ARMYN kept her room until luncheon time; but when she came down and took her seat at the table she was, outwardly, at least, her usual calm self.

When the heat of her passion had died away, she had regretted her hasty speech to Jess Warren, and now she turned towards her, saying:

"Mrs. Warren, I trust you will consider the state of my mind when I so insulted you to-day. I was beside myself. I never knew until to-day what an evil temper I possessed. Will you try and forget my words?"

It is only generous natures that can make or accept apologies graciously and gracefully. Jess Warren was not of this order.

"It's of no consequence," she said, with an effort at carelessness that was an utter failure. "I am not at all offended. Let it pass."

Let it pass. Jess Warren would watch for an opportunity to avenge this insult to her wounded vanity.

"I was terribly angry," said Lenore, turning her eyes towards Mrs. Ruthven. "Inwardly, I am angry yet. I think if I should hear that I had dealt that villain his death-blow I could not be hypocrite enough to say that I regretted it. I don't like to talk of the affair; let us never mention it, please."

They had planned a drive for the following day. Clarence Arteveldt was to come with his landau and take the three ladies, Mrs. Warren, Lenore Armyn, and Kate Seaton, for a drive in the parks.

"We must make the most of this fine weather," Arteveldt had said; "September is *the* month for pleasant drives, and it is almost gone."

Clarence Arteveldt had been falling deeper and deeper into love's quagmire, and suspense was becoming unbearable. He had decided, over and over again, to declare his love for Lenore, but somehow the right sort of an opportunity had been lacking.

If any one had hinted that he feared a refusal, this drawing-room god would have laughed in derision; and yet there was a something in the manner of Lenore Armyn, the obscure orphan, that kept him at a distance, and made him fear the ordeal of a test. She was so different from any girl he had ever known; she had such a manifest disregard for wealth and station, he could not understand her. But the more incomprehensible she became, the more he loved her.

As they drove through the city on this pleasant day he was inwardly vowing to put an end to his suspense, and declare himself. He did not just know how the opportunity for a declaration was to be brought about, but, all unknown to himself, he had an able coadjutor.

Mrs. Warren, the artful, was fully aware of the situation. It was plain enough to all save Lenore that Clarence Arteveldt was her lover. And it was plain enough to Mrs. Warren that Lenore Armyn had no love for the young man. She had not been in daily, almost hourly, contact with the frank girl without learning to read her opinion of the men who hovered about her.

"What a splendid catch Clarence Arteveldt would be for you, Lenore," she had said one day; "so rich, and then so handsome! And I think he likes you."

"A splendid catch indeed!" the girl had replied, with her ringing laugh. "Why, Mrs. Warren, you wouldn't condemn me to live all my days with such an aimless cumberer of the ground as *he*, would you? If one wants a parlour ornament, a china man would be equally attractive, and much less trouble. Think of being married to a *pretty* man!"

Jess Warren was one of those women who like to have a love affair on hand, even if it belongs to some one else. And it is probable that she would have put her little cat's-paw into this one, even if Lenore Armyn had not incurred her displeasure. But then she would have sheathed the claws, and meddled in a different way. *Now* she was prepared to scratch.

They were driving south on Dearborn Street, when a trifling incident occurred. They had halted at the Madison Street crossing, because of the press of vehicles, and the passage of street cars, when Clarence Arteveldt, who sat beside Lenore, put a hand upon her arm, saying:

"Miss Armyn, do you see that handsome fellow there waiting for that car to pass? The one in grey, I mean."

"Yes."

"That is a particular friend of mine." Then, as the carriage started forward, he leaned towards her, saying, in a low tone, "I can trust *you* with a secret; he is *a detective*."

As he uttered these words, Jess Warren, who could not hear them, and was watching the face of Lenore, said to herself:

"What did he say to make her turn so pale?"

"You hardly saw him, Miss Armyn; look again," said the young man, in his ordinary tone. "Don't you call him a fine fellow?"

"I saw him," replied Lenore, looking dicectly away from the crossing, where Neil Bathurst stood, all unconscious of the proximity of the carriage and its occupants. "I saw him distinctly; he is certainly handsome. Can't we go faster now?"

They drove upon the south boulevard, and from thence to the western portion of the city.

"Let's drive in," said Jess, as they approached Union Park. "Let's drive in and get out and see the horrid bear, and go up on the mound; we have driven so far that it will rest us, and Lenore has never been in Union Park on foot. Have you, dear?"

Thus appealed to, Lenore, who had been invariably polite to Jess, on principle, signified her approval of the plan, and they left the driver to meditate at his leisure, while they walked about the park.

Without being able to tell just how it happened, Clarence Arteveldt found himself walking beside Jess Warren. He was scarcely able to conceal his chagrin at this arrangement, but Mrs. Warren chatted carelessly until the two girls were left out of hearing, then she looked up in his face and said, with her most sympathetic smile:

"Shall I guess your thoughts, Mr. Arteveldt?"

Clarence looked annoyed.

"You are thinking of Lenore," said pussy-cat, softly, "and no wonder; she is a sweet girl. Take my advice, sir, and don't lose too much time. Half the men who have seen her are wild about her."

"But what can I do?" said Clarence, thrown completely off his guard.

"Do! why, make sure of her at once. Don't let some one else come in ahead of you."

"Mrs. Warren," said he, suddenly, "do you think she cares for me?"

"How should *I* know?" laughed the widow. "I would tell you if I could. I like you both, and would like to see you both happy."

"If you could only find out for me," he said, eagerly. "If you could say to me,

'Clarence, I know she loves you,' I would give you anything. I would give thousands for a word of hope!"

"Foolish boy," purred the widow. "Do you mean to say that if I could tell you how to win Lenore Armyn you would give me—say, five thousand dollars?"

"I do! I do! Only tell me how, and it is yours."

"Listen!" said the woman, moving nearer to him. "I will go and draw off Kate Seaton. Then do you propose to Lenore Armyn without loss of time. If she refuses you—but of course she won't—I promise that she shall unsay her words. She shall be your wife. I can tell you how to win her, *and I will.*"

"Are you in earnest?"

"Perfectly so. If you want my help, do as I say; if you don't, we will drop the subject."

"But if she refuses me?"

"If she refuses you, I will meet you this evening, say, at seven o'clock. I will go over to Miss VanBuren's, and you must call there; then you can offer to escort me home, and I will tell you how to win a wife."

She turned abruptly and called to the girls. In a few moments the positions were reversed, and Clarence Arteveldt had the opportunity he had longed for and dreaded.

Jess found no other chance to speak to him, but his face, as they drove towards home, was not a happy one. As he assisted her from the carriage he whispered in her ear: "I will call at Miss VanBuren's to-night at seven," and Jess Warren entered the house with a triumphant smile upon her lips.

Miss VanBuren's dwelling was nearly a block from the Ruthvens, and an hour later saw the widow and Carrie VanBuren standing in its doorway. They had been in close consultation for more than an hour, and Mrs. Warren was taking her leave.

"You are *sure* there is no risk?" asked Miss VanBuren, with a foxy look in her eyes.

"Perfectly sure; if you can manage your part as you say you can."

"Oh! that is easy."

"Then the rest will be. Leave me to talk him over. I know just how to do it. His love is perfectly selfish; he will do anything to gain the girl. Trust me to manage him. Our parts will be simple; we have only to look on, be perfectly surprised, and as indignant as we like—and pocket a thousand dollars each."

"I'll do it," said Miss VanBuren, with an emphatic nod; "it's worth some risk." And the pussy-cat went home, content and purring.

CHAPTER XII.

SPRINGING THE TRAP.

NEARLY a week elapsed before the plotters found a suitable opportunity for putting their scheme into execution. Not that it had taken so long to persuade Clarence Arteveldt. For the first time in his gay, dissolute life, that young man had found himself thwarted. For the first time he had found a woman who could be insensible to the charms of his person—and purse.

Under the skilful manipulations of Jess Warren all the worst passions, the lowest and most selfish elements, of an always selfish nature, arose and asserted themselves. The widow knew her man. She understood him as he did not understand himself. He was as wax in her hands. And yet Clarence Arteveldt would have scoffed at the idea of being managed—and that by a woman.

"You have but one flaw in Lenore's eyes," said the artful woman, when, on the evening preceding the day destined to inaugurate a tragedy in the lives of the lover and the unloving, they were rehearsing their programme for the last time—"while she admires your charms of person and manner, and acknowledges you socially perfect, she asserts that you are lacking in *force*, that you are too prosaic; in short, not enough like a hero in a novel, or a knight in a play. Only yesterday she said to Kate, who, by-the-bye, is a great fool, 'It is no wonder that love seems out of date, when men woo with bouquets and opera boxes, and hob-nob with the ones who slander their own sisters. What man would fight for a woman *now?* One might love a knight who would overcome all obstacles to win the lady of his choice, if only for his very bravery, but sighing swains who accept their *congé*, and then grow misanthropical on champagne and smoke—bah, I don't admire them!' Mark my words, Clarence, give her a taste of the romantic, once show her that you are in *earnest*, and she will forgive you, and love you into the bargain. I *know it.*"

This supposed speech of Lenore Armyn's—considering that it emanated from the not over-eloquent brain of Mrs. Warren—produced a marked effect upon the young man, and added new strength to his already sufficiently firm resolve.

"She shall find out whether I am a mere carpet knight, or not," he muttered, as valiantly as if about to storm a city. "Everything is settled, then. You say that Jeff does not *know?*"

"Jeff knows that we are coming to dine

with him, and that we are to bring a lady friend. Also, that you are to be of the party. He told Carrie that he should invite some young fellow, a friend of his, and we didn't dare object, of course. He seemed unusually glad to give this little dinner party; said that he expected to enjoy himself very much."

"But he doesn't know——"

"How exceedingly ignorant and unsophisticated Miss Armyn is! What a question! *You* know that if he *did* he would soon spoil our plans."

"But he won't kick afterwards?"

"Not he. Jeff is too philosophical for that."

There had stood in the way of their success a formidable obstacle in the shape of Miss Kate Seaton. But a way had been found to dispose of her, a way that made the introduction of a new confederate necessary.

Luckily for the plotters, Clarence Arteveldt could suggest an improvement here. His friend, almost shadow, George Fordham, had been assigned an outside part in the plot. Clarence suggested that Fordham be the man who should keep Kate Seaton from doing mischief, and at the same time make the girl an unconscious abettor to their vile ends. To this end Fordham, who was but slightly acquainted with the Ruthvens, and who had not been included in the little gathering that welcomed Lenore Armyn to the city, must put himself upon an easier footing among them.

In a home where the formalities were so little observed this was not a difficult matter. During the week that intervened between the hatching of the plot and the execution thereof, Clarence Arteveldt was, as usual, an almost daily visitor at the Ruthvens, and, as his intimate friend, George Fordham two or three times accompanied him, on which occasion he, Fordham, devoted himself almost exclusively to Kate Seaton.

Kate's admirers were not numerous, and the courteous attentions of the good-looking young reporter were not unwelcome to her; and when one day, the very last in the month of September, the landau of Clarence Arteveldt, and a light carriage, driven by Fordham, and drawn by a handsome pair of bays, drew up before the door, she was as eager as any for a drive.

It happened that Miss Carrie VanBuren had dropped in, and straightway, with much gay badinage and laughter, the driving party was formed, Mr. Fordham and Kate Seaton driving away in the smaller conveyance, and Mr. Arteveldt with Lenore, Jess and Miss VanBuren, in the landau.

There had been from the first an antipathy between Miss VanBuren and Lenore Armyn, not manifest in the words or manner of either, but felt to a certain extent by both. It seemed there could be nothing in common between the two. But Miss VanBuren was a prime favourite with all the Ruthven household, was second only to Lenore's self, and Lenore Armyn was not the girl to give expression to her dislike for the friend of her friends.

The day was exhilarating, and the party in high spirits. They had driven about for more than an hour, during which time Mr. Fordham, for some reason, had allowed his bays to fall behind the landau, when suddenly the gushing Miss VanBuren uttered a little shriek of rapture and leaned forward, clapping her gloved hands, while she said,

"Oh, *girls!* such a splendid idea. Let's stop and surprise Uncle Jeff! Let's make him give us one of his splendid bachelor dinners! That will finish off our drive and add a spice to it."

Jess Warren turned a beaming face towards Lenore.

"*Do* let's!" she said appealingly. "Carrie's uncle is such a jolly old bachelor, and his rooms are *exquisite*—such books, such pictures; won't it be fine, Mr. Arteveldt?"

"Fine, indeed," replied Clarence, as if suddenly caught with the idea. "The old chap would be more than glad to have us pounce in upon him. I'm in favour of it if it suits Miss Armyn."

"Anything that is pleasant and agreeable to the rest will suit Miss Armyn," said that young lady, indifferently. "But, Kate and Mr. Fordham?"

"Well, now that we are so independent of them, I must tell you a secret," replied Arteveldt. "The fact is, Fordham declared his intention of taking Miss Seaton for a *tête-à-tête* drive, and when I came out with my landau he quite snubbed me. I don't really think they will favour us, but of course we can ask them."

"It is evident that they don't covet our society," said Jess, looking back. "They are out of sight this minute. Well, do we go?"

"Yes; do, do!" said Miss VanBuren.

"Yes, by all means, if you agree, Miss Armyn," added Arteveldt.

"Oh, Lenore! *please* say yes," coaxed Jess.

"As I never heard of Miss VanBuren's uncle until the present moment, he can't, of course, be very obnoxious to me," replied Lenore. "I am at your service."

Thus, with apparent carelessness, was ended the first act in this shameful drama.

Ten minutes later the horses were drawn up before a huge, brown, stone building, which stood almost in the centre of a block of similar commercial-looking edifices, in one of Chicago's busiest thoroughfares. The pavements swarmed with people, and street cars, carriages, hacks, drays, and all manner of vehicles blocked the roadway and made frequent stoppings and slow progress a matter of necessity.

"We might get out first and run in to announce ourselves, while you wait for a chance of seeing Mr. Fordham," suggested Miss VanBuren to Arteveldt.

"A good idea," laughed the young man, seeming for the time to have forgotten to consult Lenore. "You two ladies, being quite at home, can run along; I will escort Miss Armyn."

In a moment the two, Jess and Carrie VanBuren, were out of the carriage and had disappeared up a broad flight of stone steps just beyond. Clarence Arteveldt made a pretence of looking vainly for his friend, and then he said,

"We won't wait out here, Miss Armyn; I will take you in, and set the driver to watch for our friends."

Had Lenore looked back, as she sprang from the carriage, she might have seen Mr. Fordham and Kate Seaton coming slowly around the corner, not half a block away.

"Hallo! there is Arteveldt and Miss Armyn," exclaimed Fordham, so promptly that a suspicious listener might have fancied that he expected to see them there. "Where are the other ladies? and where in the—beg pardon, Miss Seaton, where are they going?"

Where, indeed!

"Drive faster," cried Kate Seaton; "call to them!" Then, as Lenore and her escort disappeared up the stone steps, she sank back with a low cry, "My God! my God! *where* have they gone?"

Fordham turned towards her a face upon which rested an expression of unutterable astonishment.

"Good heavens!" he cried, in well-feigned alarm, "they have gone—but no, I am—I must be mistaken."

"You are not mistaken," cried Kate Seaton, wildly; "I *saw* them. See!"—as they came opposite the stone steps,—"they went up *those* steps. They are behind that green door. My God! what shall we do? *Lenore Armyn is in a gambler's den.*"

More than once, while passing through the streets in company with her sister and Charlie Ruthven, had the latter pointed to that green, nail-studded door, saying,

"Look, girls, there is the finest private gambling-house in the city; there is the den of the keenest gambler in all Chicago. He is called among sporting men Gentleman Jeff."

Let us follow Lenore, the victim, and with her make the acquaintance of Gentleman Jeff.

They go up a flight of stairs, pausing midway at a door which swings open at their approach; the door is massive and presents a battered appearance, and near the top is a little sliding panel through which one, standing two steps higher on the inside, could take observations. This door opens on hinges that are stout springs, and a coloured servant holds it back with some effort. They pass this portal, which Lenore scans wonderingly, and arrive at the landing; here the carpets are like dark moss, and a tall man, plainly dressed and wearing an expression of habitual gravity, awaits them.

Hurriedly Arteveldt performs the ceremony of introduction, so hurriedly that Lenore does not catch the name of the tall man, and then the three pass up another flight of softly-carpeted stairs along a broad, dimly-lighted passage, and into a room rich in upholstery, glowing with rare flowers, adorned with pictures, cabinets, book-cases, bronzes—all that wealth could purchase, and all in faultless taste. This was the home of no ordinary gambler; Gentleman Jeff had some claim to his title.

Here waited Jess Warren, Carrie VanBuren, and a young man with pale hair and paler eyelids, Mr. Williams—the friend of "Uncle Jeff."

It was a very pleasant party; everybody talked and everybody laughed, "Uncle Jeff" the least of the party perhaps, but then he was not a man to laugh at doubtful wit. Lenore soon decided upon this, and her keen eye saw that her host was inclined to be quietly amused and somewhat sarcastic at the expense of the widow and his niece. Lenore was a trifle surprised at this, but felt, nevertheless, almost tempted to encourage him in it—any woman can tell you why. She does not feel much drawn towards Mr. Williams. He laughs more than he talks, and has not a keen look by any means. Nevertheless, Mr. Williams *is* a cunning young man, otherwise he would not be the friend of Gentleman Jeff.

Presently, surprisingly soon, dinner is served. It is sent from an adjacent restaurant, and noiseless waiters bring in a table, a queer-looking table, covered with

green baize, upon which they spread a snowy cloth. It is a faultless dinner, and Lenore Armyn, seated beside her courteous and entertaining host, thinks that bachelor hospitality is a fine thing. She thinks that there is an unusual amount of champagne at this dinner, and that Jess and her friend are drinking of it rather freely. But "bachelors can't be expected to know what is proper at a dinner like this," she thinks; and she drinks no wine herself, although so often urged by Jess and young Arteveldt.

At last dessert is on the table, and now the drama is interrupted by a farce, not counted upon by the conspirators. In the hall voices are heard in loud altercation, and in another moment the door is flung open and an elderly man appears upon the threshold. The host looks up, and utters an exclamation of astonishment.

"Colonel," he says, quickly, "what is the matter? Come in!"

"What is the matter!" cries the man, excitedly. "The *police are coming!* You will be raided within three minutes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FARCE AND DRAMA IN A GAMBLER'S DEN.

THE scene that follows this startling announcement is indescribable. All seem panic-stricken; but the terror of Jess Warren, Carrie VanBruen and Mr. Williams passes all bounds.

Miss VanBruen is in violent hysterics. Jess runs distractedly from window to window; and finally flings herself upon the broad chest of the grey-haired newsbearer, imploring him to save her. But the conduct of Mr. Williams is still more extraordinary; he is running about the room, half-bent, peering under chairs, lounges, everything; trying to wrench open cabinet doors, and peer into various drawers, in a distracted effort to secrete himself in impossible places.

"Oh! hide me, Jeff," he implores, tragically. "Don't let me be taken; it would be my ruin. Tell them I never gamble, Jeff! Oh, why did you ask me to come here to meet these wicked women?"

But Jeff is standing erect and silent, watching the three with a queer look in his eyes.

"Hurry, Jeff," cries the elderly man, making a movement as if about to shoulder Jess. "Bring along the women, we will drop them out of the back window, it's not more than forty feet."

Jess utters a scream of terror, and Clarence Arteveldt, who has been standing motionless and bewildered, starts forward involuntarily. But Mr. Williams makes a frantic dash at the speaker.

"Take *me!*" he cries, holding out two angular arms. "Save *me*, do, dear man! drop *me*, carefully, down first! I'm so *young* to be caught in a gambling-house! *Don't* let me be arrested!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" shrieks Miss VanBuren, who is kicking vigorously; "take me out, take me out, don't let me be arrested; open the window and let me jump!"

At the moment of the alarm they have sprung from the table as by one impulse—all except Lenore Armyn. That young lady has not stirred. She sits in her place, gazing from one to another, with an expression of the most absolute wonder upon her face; but not one shade of fear. She turns her gaze upon the host; he does not look like a frightened man.

"What does it mean, sir?" she says, somewhat imperiously. "The police—and all this talk of arrest; what has that young man done?"

But Gentleman Jeff does not hear her. His eyes are fixed upon that magnificent impromptu comedian, his friend Williams, whose gymnastics are indeed wonderful, and his features are convulsed with some strong emotion, which he in vain endeavours to suppress.

Lenore turns her eyes towards Mr. Williams, and a scornful smile curls her lip. What he says of the gambling-house is unnoted by her then; the comedy begins to explain itself; she has not read the riddle of the drama as yet. It has all transpired in an instant; as she again turns towards Gentleman Jeff his composure utterly deserts him; with a shout of merriment he falls back in his chair and shakes with pent-up laughter. The shout is echoed by the "Colonel," who, dropping Jess without ceremony, wipes the perspiration from his ruddy face, and shouts in his turn. Slowly the colour returns to the countenance of Clarence Arteveldt, and by degrees the shrieks of the two women grow less. Mr. Williams is the last to recover his presence of mind.

"Won't we be arrested?" he whines, piteously. "Won't anybody know that I am in a gambling-house?"

"In a gambling-house!" Lenore comprehends the words now, for the first time. For an instant her face is ghastly in its pallor; then she turns away and waits in silence for the end of the comedy, in which she has no part.

Long and loud is the laughter of the two

gamblers. She sees Clarence Arteveldt becoming suddenly fierce as he confronts the man addressed as "Colonel."

"Curse you!" he cries, wrathfully. "Have *you* played this shameful trick upon us?—upon me? How dare you create such a panic? see how you have frightened these women!"

"*Women!*" Carrie VanBuren begins to recover suddenly, and Jess releases the luckless Colonel.

Then it is not true; their private disgrace will not be made public property. There is a chorus of questions, recriminations, exclamations. Mr. Williams suddenly ceases his dramatic efforts, and comes over to Jeff.

"*You* put the Colonel up to that dodge, old man," he said, flinging himself into his lately abandoned seat with a laugh. "By the powers, but it almost fooled *me* for just a minute." And Gentleman Jeff laughs, as he replies,

"Well, perhaps. But you have mistaken your calling, Williams; you should go on the stage."

It takes a long time for the party to regain their composure, and Jess and Carrie are full of wrath because they have been made so ridiculous; but at last they are partially calmed. Then for the second time Lenore Armyn, moving forward, addresses her host,

"Sir, I am here as your guest. Tell me, is this a gambling-house?"

Gentleman Jeff looked down at her in unfeigned surprise. "Did you not know it?" he asked.

"If I had," retorted she, bitterly, "I should not be here. For Heaven's sake, tell me what sort of people are these who have brought me here—these women!"

His face became stern.

"Did these two women and this man bring you here by unfair means? Did you not know I was a gambler?"

"No."

"Well," without even a glance at the others, "it is not the first time *they* have been here. If you shrink from contact with a gambler you should shrink from *them*. They have entrapped you. If I had known their game it would never have been played. Shall I send you away now; you will not remain with them?"

Lenore's eyes are blazing now with the light that Jess knew so well. It was thus she looked when she had struck down the burly German. Involuntarily the two plotting women draw near together, and away from Clarence Arteveldt, as if to let him bear the burden of their united iniquity alone. Every eye is fixed upon Lenore as the gambler awaits her answer. The two men, who do not yet quite understand the scene, are deeply interested. What will she do? what will she say? all are auditors, and all interested, although in different degrees. For a time, a long time, it seems to them all, she says nothing, only her eyes speak unutterable things. Then she speaks, and they are astonished to hear her voice so calm. Calm! it is like the clear ring of fine steel.

"No! I will not go—yet. You say I have been entrapped. Then it must have been for a purpose. Will you give me the right to command in your kingdom for a few moments?"

"I will."

"Then tell those women to leave this room; and your friends as well. I——"

Suddenly Clarence Arteveldt steps forward. "Miss Armyn," he says, hurriedly, "let *me* speak with you alone. I can explain all this to you. I can make it as if it had never been."

"*You?*" The word falls on him like a lash.

He turns towards the gambler. "For God's sake, Jeff, let me speak to her alone!"

Gentleman Jeff again turns to Lenore. "It must be as she says," he replies, coldly.

"Let him have his way," she answers. It is strange, that icy voice, together with the eyes of fire.

Obedient to the gesture of the gambler, they file slowly and silently from the room. As Jess passes Clarence Arteveldt she whispers, "Be a *man* now, or all is lost."

When the door has closed, and they are alone together, these two face each other in silence. Still the lurid light burns in the girl's eyes; still her lips are colourless.

Clarence Arteveldt has nerved himself for this, has been drinking deeply, to prepare himself for this interview. Let come what will he must not falter now, that would be to make himself doubly despised. There is an awful stillness in the room, and then her incisive voice says, "I am waiting."

He would approach her, but she motions him back.

"Stand where you are," she says, "and speak; my patience is not boundless."

"Nor is mine," he breaks in abruptly, yet obeying her. "My patience was exhausted. I loved you; I asked you to be my wife. You refused. You thought I had given you up. Instead, I was planning to win you in spite of yourself. There was but one way, and I took it. You will say that it was dishonourable. I know that! I would do more to win you. I have lured you here—into a gambler's den. As we

came up the steps George Fordham was so near that he saw us enter. Your friend, Kate Seaton, saw you too. You and I alone were visiting a gambler's den. What can they think? You know as well as I. But there is a safe way out of this. Let me go now and seek Fordham; let me say to him, 'Miss Armyn is my promised wife.' Say yourself to Kate Seaton, 'Clarence is to be my husband,' and all is well. In this republican city one may visit even such a place as this with one's affianced. Once more I ask you to be my wife. I offer you riches and love."

"And—if I refuse, I shall be slandered to my dearest friends; all who have known me as a friend of the Ruthvens will know that I have been a gambler's guest—for the sake of the two good women under his roof, Charles Ruthven must turn from his door that base woman, Jess Warren, and myself; when I go forth, this stigma will follow me, I cannot escape from it. And—I am alone in the world. This is what you would tell me."

It is strange to hear her say these things in that calm, frozen way.

"You think my statement as to how I was decoyed here would weigh as nothing against the fact of my presence in such a place? that the man who is master here would not aid me to set myself right in the eyes of my friends?" she continued.

"I think that you would only blacken yourself by selecting a professed gambler for your champion; that would only be to link your name with his," replied the young man, doggedly.

For the first time she faltered. She reeled, as if about to fall.

"Say one word," he urged. "Say that I may straightway announce our engagement. Think how I must love you to have done this. Should I not have some reward for such devotion?"

Strange that such words should restore her courage, her outward calm. One moment she seemed to ponder, then she said, as if thinking aloud, "Yes. *Such* devotion should be rewarded—amply rewarded. Such debts of gratitude should be paid to the uttermost."

"Then say yes," he urges, blindly. "Say you will be my wife."

Slowly she makes answer. "I am at your mercy—now. You can blast my honour—or save it. I realize my peril and your power. I choose to save my honour, even if to do it I must wed *dishonour*. Clarence Arteveldt, *you shall be rewarded!* I will marry you."

CHAPTER XIV.

UNRECOGNIZED LINKS.

NEARLY three weeks have elapsed since the fatal afternoon when Lenore Armyn gave that strangely worded promise to Clarence Arteveldt. October is wearing away, and for the actors in our strange drama there has been a season of comparative quiet. Jocelyn, the eccentric, appears and disappears, after his usual fashion; he has gathered some fragments of information concerning the mysterious mother and child, and is following up these clues; while Neil Bathurst keeps a close watch upon Jason Bradwardine. It seems strange, but is not the less true, that between the supposed widow and Jason Bradwardine there should spring up a certain friendliness that might, in time, tend to the further enlightenment of the fair "Mrs. O'Neil."

A good detective must also be a good actor. Neil Bathurst was not only a good actor, he was an educated one; possessed of a slight figure—slight at least for a man—small feet and hands, and regular features, that, while not effeminate, were by no means heavy; he had been quick to see the advantage that his physique might give him over many, nay most, of his profession.

He had practised the gait, gestures, and style of language common to the fair sex, as an artist studies for a loved profession. He had made feminine dress, and many feminine employments, a part of his education, and was not only a capital ventriloquist but an able elocutionist. He took the most scrupulous care of his hands and feet, and the former were as white and soft as the hands of the daintiest fair lady. Not the best and most skilled of stage "transformation artists" knew better how to apply an army of little brushes, leads, dyes, paints, and pigments, and not one had a larger or more motley collection of disguises, or "make-ups," than had Neil Bathurst. In his profession he was an artist, *par excellence*. Rob Jocelyn had truly said that he made a "fine figure of a woman." True, Rob had objected that he was a trifle tall, but then the world is full of equally tall women. Perhaps Jason Bradwardine had a *penchant* for tall women; at any rate, Mrs. O'Neil found favour in his eyes.

These weeks of September and October were filled, for the young detective, with small incidents that were, unknown to him then, to lead to great results. There were long talks with Jason Bradwardine, numerous feints at searches in all sorts of places, for the woman who had stolen the

wallet, efforts to obtain some light upon the subject of the Durand robbery, and countless visits in various disguises to the Durand mansion, as well as evenings passed in the society of the two fascinating young ladies under that roof, with whom, as well as with the elder members of the family, he seemed rapidly becoming popular.

One evening, some two weeks after the entrapping of Lenore Armyn, Neil Bathurst stood before his dressing-case making an elaborate dinner toilet, preparatory to setting forth to dine at the table of Mr. James Durand. He had chosen lodgings in one of those convenient buildings where, because of its location and size, the stir and bustle was continuous; the building was situated on a corner, and had, besides the two street entrances, another, opening from an alley or narrow court. It was easy and comparatively safe to go in and out from such a place in the various characters a detective must sometimes assume, and Neil had good reason to be satisfied with his quarters.

In the character of Mrs. O'Neil he had lately returned from an interview with Jason Bradwardine, or Mr. Brady, and he was now engaged in removing the *cosmetique* from his smoothly-shaven face, preparatory to adjusting the small silken moustache, which not even Rob Jocelyn had suspected of being false, previous to the night when the disguised Neil had led him such a chase.

Neil Bathurst was too cunning a detective to put himself under the hands of the barber. He did his own shaving, and no one ever saw him, *in propriâ personâ*, without this small hirsute appendage he now held in his hand. He had but just adjusted the moustache to his satisfaction, and was about to put away his cast-off apparel, when a tap, which he instantly recognized, sounded upon the door. Hastily thrusting the garments of Mrs. O'Neil into a closet, the key of which he turned cautiously, he admitted the visitor. It was Clarence Arteveldt, looking a trifle pale, and more anxious than was usual for him.

"Where are you bound to-night, Bath.?" he queried, after some rambling conversation. "Seems to me you are getting fond of society. I haven't seen much of you, but have heard Fordham speak of your being at old Durand's quite often of late."

Neil Bathurst made no reply. He was making a mental note. How should Fordham be so well aware of his visits to the Durands? They had never met there; indeed Neil was not aware that Fordham was on visiting terms with the family. "I must look into this," thought the detective.

"I never see you any more," complained Arteveldt; "you are always on the wing, it seems."

"Why, no," laughed Neil. "It's true that I have only seen you once since your engagement, and then hardly long enough to offer congratulations. Are you as happy as you hoped to be, now that you have won this paragon? And have you come to ask me to be introduced? because, if you have, I'll make a point of placing *one* evening at least at your disposal."

"It's too late now," said Arteveldt, flushing slightly, while a look of annoyance flitted across his face. "Lenore is a queer girl; she has taken the whim not to be introduced to any of my friends until after the wedding; so you will have to wait."

"Well! I will try and wait in patience," replied Neil, at the same time thinking that Miss Lenore Armyn was, to say the least, an eccentric young lady.

"You will of course come to our wedding?" pursued Arteveldt. "We will be married within the next three weeks."

"So soon?"

"Well, it's none too soon for me. But it can't be any sooner. I have taken a house in a swell locality, and it is being fitted up in fine style. Lenore has grand notions for a country girl, and I am humouring her to the top of her bent. There won't be a finer furnished house in the city. You must go with me to see it some day, Bath."

"All right. And your mother, how does the idea of this new daughter-in-law suit her?"

"It didn't suit her at all at first, and she vowed she would not receive Lenore as a daughter; but, of course, she came to terms, as I knew she would. The old lady wanted me to marry Aura Durand, and I don't know but that the girl expected it; but, good Lord! I never intended to marry *her*."

"And yet the world—your world—called you her lover," said Bathurst.

"Well—yes," laughing nervously, "so they did, but a man can't marry all his sweethearts. And Aura can find enough lovers."

"But it is true that she really cared for you."

"Perhaps—a man can't tell nowadays. She is a flirt, that I know;" then suddenly, "I say, Bath., are *you* getting spooney in that quarter?"

"Not particularly."

"I wish you were—just a little. Aura's a nice girl."

"Oh, very."

"Well!" rising hastily, "I must move on—just dropped in to look at you. I escort Lenore and my mother to the opera to-night. Lenore won't go out at all with me, except when chaperoned by the old lady."

"Discreet bride that."

"I should say so. You will come to my wedding, Bath.? Married in church, you know, reception after at our own house. Lenore won't travel. You will get the cards in a few days. You won't fail to come?"

"Of course I shall come, old man. I am getting quite curious about your eccentric beauty."

"And—I say, Bath.—would you mind—just for a friend, you know—would you mind finding out what Aura thinks about my marriage? *You* can easily manage that."

Bathurst looking almost angry, but after a moment's silence, replied,

"That's rather a delicate matter; but if it comes in my way I will try and draw Miss Durand out."

In a short time Arteveldt took his leave, and Neil Bathurst sat alone thinking.

"I begin to think that I grow *too* observant," he mused; "I am constantly seeing an underdrift in the manners and conversation of people about me. What can have inspired Arteveldt to ask me to sound Miss Durand? Well, he has piqued my curiosity. I *will* sound her. But it is doubtful if I communicate to him the result of my investigations. What sort of a country girl can this be, this betrothed of his, who will only go out escorted by his mother, who can relinquish the glories of a bridal tour, who must have a mansion of magnificence, and who declines to meet the friends of her bridegroom elect; she is carrying things with a high hand now, how will it be when she becomes Mrs. Arteveldt?"

How it would be he little guessed.

"That's queer about Fordham," he muttered, as he lowered the gas before setting out for the Durands, "I must look after him a little."

Two hours later, as he sat near Miss Durand in the rich man's stately drawing-room, Neil Bathurst turned towards her suddenly, saying:

"Have you seen the young lady who is soon to be Mrs. Arteveldt, Miss Durand?"

The heiress lifted her eyes to his with perfect composure.

"I have not had the pleasure. Have *you* seen her, Mr. Bathurst?"

"No. I have been equally unfortunate. I suppose, then, we shall have the pleasure of taking our first look at her together?"

"Indeed! How?"

"At the wedding."

"To be sure," with a soft little laugh, "I should be bridesmaid; Mr. Arteveldt and myself were very good friends. I think him one of the pleasantest young men I know."

"I'll tell him *that*," was Neil's mental comment. "Good heavens! if this girl did love him, what an actress she must be." Then he said,

"Arteveldt ran in upon me just before I came here. He tells me that he is fitting up a house in elegant style; they do not intend to travel."

"Indeed, how very odd!" then, after a pause, "where is this house of theirs?"

"I did not learn." As he made this reply, he turned his face toward Miss Annin, and saw that the eyes of that young lady were bent upon Aura Durand in keen scrutiny.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO WOMEN PLEAD.

LIVING had been a new experience to Lenore Armyn since that afternoon in the house of Gentleman Jeff. Clarence Arteveldt had been better than his word; he had taken upon himself the responsibility of explaining this delicate matter to Kate Seaton, and had forced Jess to aid him in so doing.

Kate was only too glad to accept any explanation, and when they told her they had not visited a gambler, but were in pursuit of a fortune-teller, who occupied rooms on an upper floor, and that Jess and Miss Van-Buren were just ahead and of the party, she was satisfied.

"Don't mention it, pray," Clarence had said to her in private; "the fact is that Mrs. Warren and her friend quite insisted upon going, although I felt that it was not quite the thing; I don't think Miss Armyn ever suspected there was a gambling-house in such close proximity."

Kate had never heard of the fortune-teller, but she readily agreed not to mention what he termed "the escapade." And so the secret was safe.

When, on that memorable afternoon, Lenore Armyn had said, "*I will marry you!*" her traitor lover had started forward with an exclamation of rapture. But she waved him back.

"Wait!" she had said; "reserve your caresses until I am your wife; it is a part of the penance I impose upon you, in punishment for your work of this day."

And since then she had not so much as allowed him to take her hand.

The days now were pretty much the same to Lenore Armyn; her friends marvelled at the change in her, but all felt the influence of her cold, proud reserve, and no one questioned her.

Once, indeed, Kate had said: "I declare, Lenore, *I* don't want to be engaged if I must become so stately and cold; you are a most *unusual* bride elect."

"I shall be an 'unusual bride,'" replied Lenore, and Jess, who had been a listener, said to her friend, Miss VanBuren, that evening,

"Depend upon it, we have not heard the last of this affair; I wish we had never meddled." To which her comrade had retorted in true woman fashion: "I *told* you it was risky. It was *your* fault."

The mother of Clarence Arteveldt had indeed opposed this engagement between her son and a girl unknown to society, whose friends were "of no social standing whatever! Only a bookkeeper's family." There had been a warm scene at the Arteveldt mansion, ending in the dogged announcement from the young man that he "would leave the house that day, or any day she chose to name, and she might disinherit him, or do as she would. But he would marry Lenore Armyn if Satan himself opposed."

Without applying the latter rather uncomplimentary clause to herself, Mrs. Arteveldt had declared her intention of going to see this "scheming girl," and of letting her know that she would not be countenanced by the mother of the man she had entrapped. This happened two days after the strange betrothal.

Early in the afternoon of that same day Lenore Armyn received the following note from her lover:

DEAREST LENORE: My mother is deeply enraged, and declares that she will visit you and persuade you to give me up. Do not be disturbed by what she says. I am independent of her fortune, and she will soon come to terms. I shall permit *nothing* to come between us *now*.

Yours, CLARENCE.

P.S.—She will probably be there soon after the receipt of this. C.

Having read this note Lenore went down to the kitchen, where Mrs. Ruthven was assisting in the preparations for the usual six o'clock dinner, and walking straight to the range, she thrust the note in among the glowing coals, saying as she did so, "I expect a call from my future mother-in-law; if she should come before I have completed my toilet please ask her to *wait*."

Mrs. Arteveldt was as good as her word. Late in the afternoon a stately carriage drew up before the door, and a haughty-looking, magnificently attired woman descended therefrom, and rang the bell vigorously.

"I wish to see Miss Lenore Armyn," said this personage, with an annihilating stare at little Mrs. Ruthven, who herself answered the ring.

"Walk in, madam," said that overpowered little lady; "I will call Miss Armyn."

Mrs. Arteveldt cast a glance of disdain about the pretty parlour as she entered it, and then seated herself with an air of infinite condescension. In a moment Mrs. Ruthven re-appeared in the parlour.

"Miss Armyn will be down presently," she said, and disappeared forthwith.

"*Presently!*" Could Mrs. Arteveldt believe her ears? Was "that girl" actually about to keep *her* waiting?

For full ten minutes she sat nursing her wrath, and then the door opened and Lenore came quietly in.

"You wished to see me, madam?" she said, coolly.

Mrs. Arteveldt stared in surprise. This unknown country girl stood before her with the utmost self-possession. She was positively beautiful, and bore herself like an equal. "Are you Miss Lenore Armyn?" asked she.

Lenore bowed.

"I am Mrs. Arteveldt," announced the visitor, looking to see a sudden change in the demeanour of the girl.

"Yes!" said Lenore, with that provoking rising inflection often used by skirmishing women.

"I am Clarence Arteveldt's mother," continued Mrs. Arteveldt, thinking the girl could not have understood her.

"So I supposed;" seating herself with much composure.

"I have called to talk with you about my son."

"You are very good."

Mrs. Arteveldt was losing her temper.

"Miss Armyn, I came to tell you that I could never consent to my son's marriage with you!" she exclaimed.

"No?" with perfect indifference.

"*What!* You do not care."

"Not in the least, madam!"

"You—you will marry him in opposition to my wishes?"

"Assuredly."

"You will come between him and his mother? *You*, who have known him for a few weeks only?"

"I will marry him."

"You have no thought for *me!*'

"No. I think only of him."

"I don't believe you; your love is but pretence."

"I pretend nothing."

"What! you pretend to love him?"

"No."

"*Girl!* what do you mean?"

"That I am no hypocrite."

"Then you dare say that you do not love my son?"

"I dare."

"Ah! I shall tell him this."

"As you please."

"Do you think he will marry you, when he knows that you do not love him?"

"Ask him, Mrs. Arteveldt."

Mrs. Arteveldt arose enraged. "Girl, take care. You think, because he is all that I have, I will submit to this imposition. I never will. You have schemed to entrap my son and his fortune; mine shall not be added to it. I will never give you my countenance, and without it society will receive you ill. You have broken up a happy home. I will never forgive my son, or tolerate you."

Lenore arose and faced her, speaking calmly: "Madam, give or withhold your countenance, it is all one to me. I would not give up Clarence Arteveldt if you implored me upon your bended knees. I will marry him if in doing so I lose every friend I have or hope to have on earth. You say I do not love him;" her voice became more intense, and her eyes flamed. "*Love* is weak compared with what I feel for your son. I care nothing for your wealth, nothing for *his*. The day will come when you will *know* that."

Then they faced each other in silence.

"I will prevent this marriage," said the mother, turning to go. "I have no more to say to you, but I will prevent this shameful marriage. It shall never be."

"You cannot do that. The bond between us is too strong. *Nothing but death can divide us.*"

With these words ringing in her ears Mrs. Arteveldt swept from the room, and from the house. There came a time when, clothed with a new meaning, they haunted her, waking and sleeping.

Mrs. Arteveldt went home, and for three days waged incessant warfare upon her son. She commanded, she implored, but her wrath and her tears were alike unavailing. On the third day, Clarence said:

"It's no use, mother; I can't stand this sort of thing. I shall leave the house to-night, and for good. If you can't accept my wife, you can't care much for me. Lenore is not a girl to be ashamed of. There is not another such in all the city. I shall have a beautiful wife, with the manners of a princess. You might well be proud of such a daughter. But if you won't, you won't. Only let me tell you this, if you don't accept her *now*, she will not recognize *you*, once she is my wife."

Then he went away and left her to think.

Mrs. Arteveldt was a vain old woman; she idolized her son; but she loved society, and she knew that her reign was well nigh over; she had counted upon a handsome, fashionable daughter-in-law, with whom she might still attend opera and ball, and who would attract to her drawing-rooms the society which, without the magnet of some younger beauty, would gradually fall away from her and them. If she alienated herself from her son and the wife he had chosen she must abandon all this. And after all Leonore Armyn was beautiful—she would grace any drawing-room. And Mrs. Arteveldt did not feel at all sure as to her ability to keep so fine and haughty a bride from becoming the fashion. Her son's fortune rendered them independent of her. And then, after all, Lenore did love her son—what else could her strange words mean?

When Clarence Arteveldt came downstairs, after packing his effects, his mother met him and put a note in his hands.

"Read it," she said, in a subdued tone, "and then take it to Miss Armyn."

With a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes he perused it. Thus it ran:

MISS ARMYN,—If you can overlook the fact of our last meeting I can do the same. I came to you prejudiced. I think I understand you better now. Let us be the friends we should be, considering how soon you will be my son's wife. He will give you this, and when next he visits you I shall hope to come with him.—Sincerely,

ELLEN ARTEVELDT.

"Mother, you're a trump," said the gratified Clarence. "Now, then, things will be more comfortable," and he hastened to deliver the note to Lenore.

After that Mrs. Arteveldt and Miss Armyn drove regularly together. Together they attended opera and theatre, escorted by Clarence. Together they shopped, and lunched at aristocratic, down-town restaurants. So the time wore on, and there was only a week now intervening before the wedding-day. Mrs. Arteveldt had chosen the *trousseau*, and the proud Lenore Armyn had made no resistance. The new house was ready for its occupants. Such a beautifully furnished house! It was the talk of the Arteveldt set. It was one of two double

houses, as they are called. They were recently-built structures, and had never had a tenant.

A short time after the one had been secured by the expectant bridegroom the other had been taken, a little to the annoyance of the first renter. The second house was still uninhabited, the lessee being tardy in taking possession. But there was plenty of evidence that the new tenant would soon be settled on the new premises. Every day loads of costly furniture were landed at the door, and Clarence Arteveldt learned that it was to be used for a genteel boarding-house. He was a little dissatisfied at this, but it was too late to complain, and in the city one cannot choose his neighbours.

It was a dreary, drizzling November day, just one week before the time fixed upon for the wedding; Lenore had kept her room all day, only appearing at mealtimes. Dusk was coming on, and a strong wind whistled about the corners.

Just a block away from the Ruthven abode the street-cars jogged drearily by, and one of them pausing, deposited a single female passenger, who hastened on through the wind and rain, heavily cloaked and closely veiled. Before the door bearing the name Ruthven, in silver letters on a black plate, she paused for a moment, then hurried up the steps and rang the bell.

"I wish to see Miss Armyn," she said, when the door was opened. "Is she at home?"

Miss Armyn was at home, and the stranger was ushered into the parlour.

Lenore Armyn came down, wondering a little who her visitor could be. At the same moment the maid-of-all-work came in, lighted the gas, drew the curtains, and withdrew herself. Then the visitor came forward and gazed eagerly at the face of Lenore Armyn, without removing the veil. Finally she said, as if to herself:

"She is beautiful—*very*."

"Who are you?" asked Lenore; "and what is your business with me?"

"You are about to marry Mr. Arteveldt," said the stranger, in a low, sweet voice.

"Yes."

"It is of him I wish to speak."

"Then proceed."

"Miss Armyn, Clarence Arteveldt is the lover, the *promised* husband of another woman."

"Well!"

"He is bound to her by every tie of honour."

Lenore Armyn laughed. "Such bonds are frail," she said.

"Frail, indeed!" retorted the veiled one, bitterly. "I have come to you as the ambassador of that other woman. She loves him to madness; she begs you to renounce him."

"She must, indeed, love him to madness."

"Miss Armyn, you surely cannot wish to marry this man, knowing the truth. I swear to you he is false, unfaithful. He has deceived you, and will again."

"You mistake. He *never* will."

"I say he *will*," excitedly; "he is by nature inconstant. Send him from you, Miss Armyn; send him back to the woman he has wronged. You are said to be as generous as you are beautiful ——"

"Then I have been misrepresented. There is no generosity in me."

"What! you do not pity this other one?"

"No; why should I? Has she not been loved by Clarence Arteveldt?"

"Ah! And you hate her for this; you are so jealous?"

Again that odd laugh from the lips of Lenore.

"Yes," she replied; "I am terribly jealous."

The veiled woman moved a step nearer, saying eagerly,

"Miss Armyn, *listen*. If you marry him, innocent blood will be upon your head; you will drive this poor girl to her death."

Lenore started.

"Is it so bad as that?"

"So bad!" The voice became almost a wail. "My God! it is worse than I can tell you; it is bitter as death."

"Ah!"—this one syllable with a queer intonation.

"It is the wreck of a life!"—the voice growing more tragic—"it is the blackness of despair! And you—you, so beautiful!—*you* do not love him as—*she* does."

Suddenly Lenore Armyn came to her side, and laid a hand upon her arm, saying, peremptorily,

"Please remove that veil!"

The visitor drew back suddenly.

"What, why?" she almost gasped.

"Because I want to see your face. Because you are pleading for yourself."

"I am not."

"I know better. I do not choose to be theatrical. If you wish to talk with me remove your veil and tell me who you are."

"Impossible!"

"Then our interview ends here," turning towards the door.

The stranger sprang forward.

"What!" she cried; "you would look upon my face to glory in my grief. You would like to laugh with *him* over my humiliation."

Lenore turned upon her fiercely.

"What are *you*, that you can impute such motives to me? Clarence Arteveldt will never hear of your visit from *my* lips. If you want me to hear you and believe you, throw aside this mystery."

The stranger hesitated.

"Will you swear to me never to speak of me to him—never to tell any one, under any circumstances, of my visit to you?"

"If you wish it."

"I *do* wish it."

"Then I swear."

The stranger moved nearer again.

"Have you ever heard him speak of any lady friend?"

"Yes; one."

"Who?"

"A Miss Durand."

"And I am Aura Durand."

She threw back the veil, and Lenore saw the fair blonde face for the first time. For a full minute they gazed at each other in silence, then Lenore said:

"Sit down, Miss Durand; can it be possible that you have come to me on such an errand?"

"Yes. I have the first, best right to Clarence Arteveldt's love; you must give him back to me."

"I cannot."

"But wait; you do not know all—I must humble myself still more—I must tell you——"

"Tell me nothing. It can make no difference."

"It must. It *shall!* Listen——"

"No," lifting her hand in admonition; "listen I cannot. You would only humble yourself uselessly."

"You will not hear me?"

"It would be worse than useless. You are not the first who has tried to make me renounce Clarence Arteveldt. I reply to you as I did to that other one: I would not listen if you knelt before me. Gold cannot buy me; threats are of no avail. I will marry Clarence Arteveldt; nothing, save death, can prevent it."

For a moment Aura Durand stood like a statue before her. For a moment she looked as if about to spring upon Lenore and clutch her throat with those clenched baby hands. Then her form drooped suddenly, her hands fell at her side; she reeled as if about to faint.

"So be it," she murmured, in a broken voice. "May Heaven forgive you. All I can ask, then, is that you keep my secret."

"I will keep your secret. Have no fear."

With drooping head, and unsteady steps, Aura Durand went out into the storm.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE BRIDAL BANQUET.

NEIL BATHURST bounded up the stairs which led to his rooms in the big commercial building, three steps at a time. It was the evening of Clarence Arteveldt's wedding, and the detective, who had been "piping" all day, had barely time to prepare for the ceremony. Plunging through the great hall he ran upon a half grown lad who was pounding lustily at his own door.

"Hello, youngster," he cried. "Don't batter my door down. What's the row?"

"Oh! it's you, be it," ejaculated the gamin, taking a close survey of him by the light from various transoms. "I thought you never would wake up."

"Well, it's me or not, according to who you take me for," replied Neil, at the same time putting a key in the door.

"I takes you fer the chap as belongs to this 'ere room—ain't your name Bathurst?"

"That's me, sonny," pushing the door open.

"Well, then, this is fer you," presenting a crumpled note, and turning to go.

"Who sent you?"

"Dunno;" from the hall without. "Good-by, Cap'n." And Neil heard him clattering down the stairs.

Having closed his door, Neil opened the envelope hurriedly. It contained a half sheet of paper covered with scrawled hieroglyphics, quite incomprehensible to any save him for whom it was intended. Neil understood it at a glance. It was a letter in cypher, the key of which was held by himself and Robert Jocelyn. Translated, the cypher read thus:—

OLD PARD,—Be at *Mike's* to-night from seven until further notice. I am up to some "queer shoving" games and can't work alone. See you later.

Neil uttered a low whistle. "Rob in town again," he muttered. "Where will he turn up next? At Mike's at seven. Why, that's the wedding hour. By Jove, fate is against my seeing the fair bride. Arteveldt will feel hurt, I suppose, at my non-appearance, but business is business. I can't desert Rob even for a wedding." And he began a queer sort of toilet, one not at all in keeping for a wedding guest.

"What an odd fish Rob is," he mused, as he prepared himself. "Turning up in all sorts of places, and after all manner of game. Who supposed him in the city now. But then—as I had not heard of him for a week, I might have expected it."

Not long after, a flashily dressed young

man came cautiously out from Neil Bathurst's room, hurried down the lesser stairway, and turned his face towards the famous gambling-house, familiarly known as "Mike's." For a second time Rob Jocelyn, by putting in a sudden appearance, had prevented a meeting between his friend Neil and the fair Lenore. The fair Lenore! How fair she was, on this, her bridal eve!

There was to be a brilliant ceremony at a stately church, and later, a reception; not at the residence of Mrs. Arteveldt the elder, but at the new home of the bride and groom. This was the wish,—the *whim*, Mrs. Arteveldt called it—of Lenore. And Lenore's wishes were equivalent to commands. She was not to be argued out of this "whim." She would have no reception at the house of her mother-in-law; she would receive her own wedding guests. Mrs. Arteveldt *mére* among the rest.

Clarence had not ventured an objection to this arrangement; in truth he saw none. "What if it is a trifle unusual," he had said to his mother, "we must receive in our own house, and why not on our bridal night? I am not afraid for Lenore. She may be ignorant in some respects regarding society, but she lacks nothing that a lady should know. I tell you what, her mother must have been not only a lady but a most extraordinary woman. Lenore never mentions her, but it is plain she has had no common training. What our city belles must acquire by education is second nature to Lenore. I believe that Mrs. Armyn was a travelled woman, an educated woman, and that she has been in the society of the best."

Finding all opposition useless, Mrs. Arteveldt had set about the task of making others think that this new departure was entirely to her liking; and she had done one thing more. Feeling convinced that her prospective daughter-in-law would not prove flexible in her hands, and relieved of the fear that had hitherto haunted her, and prevented her supplying herself with a pleasant youthful companion, she had asked Kate Seaton to come to her in that capacity. She had been pleased and attracted by Kate's pretty face and bright, cheery ways. The girl had a sweet soprano voice, and was also an excellent reader. Mrs. Arteveldt felt that having once extended her stately patronage to Lenore, it would not answer to let any barriers spring up between them. Lenore was fond of Kate, it would put them upon a pleasanter footing to have the girl in the house. Then, too, it would render Mrs. Arteveldt a trifle more independent. A young lady patronized by *her* must become popular, and Kate, when she had acquired a little more dignity, would become an ornament to society; she would soon acquire this needful dignity under the Arteveldt influence.

Kate had accepted the lady's offer gladly; the Ruthvens were far from being rich, and she had, more than once, tried to persuade her sister to let her go and seek a situation as book-keeper or clerk, in one of the many stores where young ladies were employed, but Mr. Ruthven would not consent to this. Mrs. Arteveldt's offer was something quite different. Here was an opportunity for Kate to better herself. The argument that was most to the liking of Kate's sister was contained in a speech made by Mrs. Arteveldt, when settling the matter of wages, or, as she termed it, "compensation."

"You see, Mrs. Ruthven," she had said, "the money I offer her is not much. I named so small a sum because I wish to reserve the privilege of furnishing her wardrobe myself. She will, of course, go out with me, as well as see much of society in my own house. I want her to dress in accordance with the society in which she will be thrown."

The arrangement had been completed before Lenore was made aware of the change in store for Kate, and she had not displayed as much enthusiasm as Kate had hoped for, and expected. But then, Lenore was engrossed with her own affairs.

After all, Jess Warren did not feel elated over the success of her plot. She had not anticipated anything like the present state of affairs. She had not dreamed that Clarence Arteveldt's haughty mother would, under any circumstances, consent to receive Lenore. She had not expected that Lenore would accept the situation with such apparent composure, and afterwards carry things with such a high hand. Since the affair at Gentleman Jeff's Lenore had treated Jess with marked politeness in the presence of others, and had utterly ignored her existence, if for a brief moment the two found themselves alone.

"Our turn will come," Jess had said at last, to her confederate. "When she is married and holds the purse strings, *we* can unloose them; she won't want facts to leak out when she has begun to taste the sweets of society. And if *she* won't 'come down' the old lady will. Besides, we shall have the advantage of appearing in their drawing-rooms. They won't dare slight us." They were destined to appear *once*, at least, for they were among the first to receive beautifully engraved cards

of invitation; first, to attend the ceremony of marriage, and after to attend at the reception.

There was one other odd feature at that wedding. Lenore would have no bridesmaids.

Alone they stood at the altar, two splendid specimens of physical beauty. Lenore Armyn was the fairest of all fair brides; stately as a duchess, and cold as the north star. Clarence Arteveldt had never looked handsomer, his cheeks burned with excitement, his eyes flashed triumphantly. More than one fair belle envied Lenore Armyn that evening; more than one of his male friends declared Arteveldt "a lucky dog."

Two fully expected guests were absent from the ceremony, Neil Bathurst and Aura Durand.

It was a brilliant assembly, that which gathered under the roof of Clarence Arteveldt's fine new house; not too large, just the cream of the Arteveldt set. The bride's friends being represented by Mrs. and Mr. Ruthven, Kate Seaton and—Heaven save us!—Jess Warren and Carrie VanBuren.

Reader, let us mingle with the groups of bright-robed ladies, and clerical looking men, who are gathered in those elegant rooms. Lenore Arteveldt, surrounded by a group of admiring new acquaintances, stands at the upper end of the large drawing-room, her words are few, and her face somewhat graver than a bride's face should be, but she bears herself with perfect grace, and is a good listener.

"Mrs. Arteveldt seems one of your handsome, silent sort," says a gentleman to Jess Warren, who is arrayed in a wonderful garment of rose colour—bought with the price of Lenore's wrong.

"Yes," replies the widow. "Dear Lenore is always silent—of late." The last two words *sotto voce*.

At almost the same moment Mrs. and Mr. Durand are turning away, after having proffered late congratulations to the bride and groom. But Miss Annin lingers near Lenore and Clarence.

"Aura was so disappointed at finding herself unable to come," she says, looking up at Clarence Arteveldt.

"I am sorry that she is sick," replies he. "Hope it's not serious."

"Serious! dear me, no!" laughing prettily. "Didn't you understand her father? Aura is not *sick*. She has sprained her ankle."

"Oh! a sprain! How did that happen, and when?"

"Last evening. Miss Durand was returning from the theatre. She slipped in getting from the carriage. They had to carry her in."

Others move nearer, and Miss Annin turns away. As she passes Lenore the latter puts out her hand.

"I have not the honour of Miss Durand's acquaintance," she says, looking Miss Annin straight in the eye; "nevertheless tell her that I trust she will find that her *injury* can be amended—*in time*."

Miss Annin bows, and then moves away, wearing a queer look upon her face.

"Ah, Miss Aura," she thinks, "there is a peculiar meaning in those words, or I am not good at guessing."

"Miss Durand is not here," said a lady to Clarence; "how is this, Mr. Arteveldt?"

"Miss Durand has sprained her ankle," replied the bridegroom. "I am sorry not to see her here; that makes two disappointments for me to-night. My friend Bathurst is absent, too. You remember him, Lenore," turning toward her and speaking in a lower voice—"*The detective*."

Carrie VanBuren has approached, and, unnoticed by either, stands close at the bride's elbow. She hears the low spoken words, and she sees Lenore Arteveldt start suddenly. At once her thoughts fly back to the sunny afternoon when the young man had been pointed out to Lenore, while crossing Dearborn Street. Without making her proximity known she silently turns away and seeks out Jess Warren.

"Clarence," says the bride, a moment later, leaning towards him, and speaking in a low tone, "will you arrange that Mr. Fordham shall escort Jess Warren and Miss VanBuren to the supper-room? I want them to sit next us."

"But, Lenore——"

"Don't argue, please. You are in your own house. You have only to speak to Mr. Fordham; and I insist upon it."

"Then, of course, it shall be so. But I thought you would prefer Kate——"

"I *don't* prefer Kate; she is best off with your mother. Go now and find Mr. Fordham."

Obediently, yet reluctantly, he leaves her side to do her bidding.

The guests are merry; the bride is fair; the groom triumphant. The moments speed by on golden wings.

At last comes the summons to the bridal feast. The table is laden with delicate and costly viands, rare exotics charm the senses and perfume the air; fruits of every clime are heaped about, a profusion of gorgeous colour. There is the glitter of rare and costly plate; the sparkle of clearest crystal; wines glowing with golden and ruby fire, are flowing freely as water.

The guests are very merry—they are feasting, jesting, laughing, quaffing the glowing wine. From the lower end of the table a gentleman rises, wine-glass in hand; it is Mr. Hale, the lawyer and friendly adviser of the elder Mrs. Arteveldt.

"Ladies and gentlemen, a toast," he says. "Let us fill our glasses to the health, long-life, and future happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Arteveldt."

There is a rustling, a murmur of approbation, and the gurgling of wine flowing into many glasses—then—a sudden hush—and startled eyes are turned towards the upper end of the table. The *bride* has risen to her feet; her head is thrown back defiantly; her face is as colourless as the whitest ivory. In one hand she holds a wine-glass, full to the brim—the other she extends in a commanding gesture.

"Before you drink that toast, hear me," she says, in full, firm tones. "Hear *how* Clarence Arteveldt won his wife. Before you drink to him, know of what he is capable, know that I, who stand before you to-night with a heart filled with loathing for the man whose wife I am—was *entrapped* into this marriage. All unfamiliar with the city and its wickedness, I was led by that man," pointing to the bridegroom, "and these, his confederates," signifying Mr. Fordham and the now guilty-looking women on either side of him, "into a *gambler's den*. Then I was told that the one way to save myself was by becoming the wife of the wretch who had thus entrapped me. Otherwise my friends should know that I had been a gambler's guest, and my honour would thus be blackened. Unknown to myself I stood that day where no *good* woman ever stood before. But *there* behold two women who lured me into that place with their own eyes open. Two women, who were not there for the *first* time, nor for the *second*. On *them* let the *shame* fall! Thus far their scheme has been successful. Clarence Arteveldt will hardly slander the woman who bears his name and has been the chosen *friend* of his *mother*. He has won me for his wife—but his wife in name only. *His* roof can never shelter me! I would die sooner than receive aught from his hand. He won me by fraud—but he can hold me by neither fraud nor force! Before God, I swear that never shall his hand touch mine! Never will I hear his lips call me wife! Never shall his eyes look upon me after this hour! Clarence Arteveldt, this evening has seen your triumph—this night, and all the future, shall witness mine. When to-morrow comes let then your friends and guests say, *whether or no your wife has avenged herself.*"

The words rush from her lips like living fire. So sudden, so unexpected are they, that they strike every listener dumb. Clarence Arteveldt sits like a man of stone, but his face tells its own guilt. Not one who looks upon him there doubts that Lenore has spoken the shameful truth. And the faces of Jess and her confederate, and of George Fordham, corroborate her story. Already Lenore is avenged, for these four evil ones stand before their fellow-mortals as targets for derision and scorn. For a moment the stillness is death-like; then the mother of Clarence Arteveldt falls forward in a swoon. This breaks the spell of silence and stupefaction. They turn towards Lenore, but the place where she stood is vacant. The bride has disappeared. They raise the lifeless form of Mrs. Arteveldt, and remove it from the scene of confusion; they talk in low, horror-stricken tones. Clarence Arteveldt is the last to come out of his trance; blinded, stunned by a rush of strong emotions—fear, rage, baffled passion, despair—he reels like a drunken man. He stands alone, this wretched bridegroom. The friends, who a moment since sat at his board and quaffed his wine, stand aloof now, and favour him with glances of curiosity or aversion; they are all against him to-night, to-morrow, when it will be too late, they will talk pityingly of him, and try to endow him with the virtues that he had not. All around the board see the full glasses—filled for the toast destined never to be honoured. Clarence Arteveldt starts forward and drains his glass, refills it, then fills it again. As he drinks a hand falls on his arm; he turns. It is his mother's lawyer, Mr. Hale.

"What is to be done, Arteveldt?" he asks, in a dry, unfeeling voice, as if he were acting from a sense of duty, not sympathy. "Your mother is in a swoon, shall *I* act for you?"

"Yes, act for God's sake."

"Then go to your own room, and leave that wine alone."

The bridegroom turns away with an angry gesture, and fills and drains another glass.

"Stop, man," cries the lawyer, sternly. "Don't you see that you are damaging yourself still more in the eyes of all these people? Come out of that frenzy and tell where your wife has gone. If you can explain this thing to your own credit, for mercy's sake do so."

Down goes the wine glass with a crash, it lies at the feet of the deserted bridegroom, shivered to atoms.

"Did you not hear her?" he cries, throwing out his hands wildly; "why look for her? Neither you nor I will ever find her. I might have known it, I might have understood her better. I was a blind fool; she has ruined me, body and soul—I have lost her; that is all that I care for! She is gone, *gone*, GONE!"

The last word ends in a despairing shriek, he reels backward and falls, striking his head against the carved leg of his own dining-room chair. Then Mr. Hale assumes command of everything. Presently the house is quiet, the guests are gone. A physician has been summoned, and in obedience to his command Mrs. Arteveldt is removed to her own house, borne to her carriage, accompanied by terrified Kate Seaton.

Clarence Arteveldt is compelled to retire to his own room, yes, compelled.—the darling of the drawing-room, the handsome, the wealthy, the weak-headed, traitor-hearted husband of an hour, is half mad. Rage, disappointment and wine, have mastered his reason; for the time, at least, he is a maniac and requires a keeper.

At last they are all gone, the doctor, the lawyer, every one, and the tired, excited servants are asleep. In the chamber destined for the bride lies Clarence Arteveldt; beside him a weary servant sits nodding. Suddenly the madman starts up.

"See!" he cries, with eyes distended, "she is coming, I knew she would finish her revenge! She wants to kill me now. Drive her away, John; don't let her see me! Here! come here; see, I will lay myself upon her pillow,—that may move her pity. Now lower the lights down, down, *lower yet*, her eyes gleam so. There, now lower the curtains and lie down close beside me; pull the covers about you. There! *Do it*, I tell you, and make the room darker yet! Now, that is better; give me some more wine, John."

Obediently the tired servant moves about, doing his bidding. The doctor has said that he must be kept soothed and quiet. He, the servant, presents the weak wine, containing an opiate, and then lays himself down upon the bridal bed. With his own hands the mad bridegroom pulls the satin and lace coverings about the shoulders and ears of the servant, then he settles himself down, saying, "There, I shall sleep, now."

He will sleep now; yes, as we all must sleep—*once*.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE two detectives had spent the night in the gambling-house, as had been appointed by Jocelyn in his cipher note to Neil Bathurst. All night long they had been vigilant, and just before the first hint of dawn was visible they repaired to the rooms occupied by Bathurst, having first shadowed two of the suspected counterfeiters to their respective lairs. To do this of course they had found it necessary to separate, and when Rob Jocelyn came to the room where they were to snatch a few hours sleep, he found his friend there before him.

Bathurst had thrown off a portion of his clothing, and was already in a state of semi-unconsciousness.

"Came in ahead, did you, old man?" said cheery Jocelyn; "you look fagged out, and I feel so. Let's defer explanations of any sort until we have slept a little." They had been unable to hold much intercourse during the night just past; and each was in ignorance concerning the doings of the other, since that night, weeks ago, which they had passed together in the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Robbins. "I must turn out pretty early, however, Neil; and you must do your sleeping accordingly."

With this he flung himself down beside his friend, and soon they were in the land of Nod. Notwithstanding his intention of rising with the lark, the sun was high when Rob Jocelyn awoke that morning. Muttering something rather profane, he sprang up and awakened his friend.

"Come, old man, this won't do! get up and shake yourself awake; I'm going to smoke the first thing, and while I smoke do you talk. We must cut it short, too, for I can't lose much more of this morning. Here goes then. First, how's your burglary case?"

"Pretty well—for the burglar," replied Neil rubbing his eyes. "Deuce take the burglar. I believe he went away in seven league boots."

"Not given him up, old man?"

"Never a bit. He's getting some rest, however."

"And Bradwardine?"

"Have made memoranda of everything concerning him. Got time to look at them?"

"Not now. Give it to us condensed."

"All right. After all, a small nutshell will hold the prime facts. As the widow O'Neil I am still in favour with Mr. J. B. I have done a great deal of imaginary looking for the woman who stole those papers

—she, by the bye, is convalescing slowly in the hospital recommended by Dr. Rice, while her would-be assassin languishes in the jug. I have had several conversations with her; she is a woman to be pitied. I shall see that Mr. J. B. does *not* get his hands on her. Well! I have satisfied myself on a few points. First, that this man, Brady, as he calls himself, *is* Bradwardine beyond a doubt. Second, that the loss of those papers is a heavy blow to him. Third, that he is an unscrupulous man, and intent upon mischief of some sort. Fourth, that he is playing this game, whatever it is, to win a fortune; and fifth, that he has visited that New York village before you, and has at this present moment a private inquirer searching for the hiding place of the mother and child."

"Thanks," laughing lazily; "I found out that last for myself."

"Did you?" exclaimed Neil.

"Yes; they have both been in Elm Valley before me, Brady and the 'tracker.' Is that the end of your budget?"

"Pretty much."

"Well, you have not done badly; but as he may at any time get news from his private inquirer one or the other of us must keep an eye upon Brady."

"Of course."

"Well, here goes for 'Mistress Bourne;' the Elm Valleyites declare her a foreigner—we knew that before, however; she was very beautiful and very sad; lived like a nun, at least as secluded, and seemed to have plenty of money—but you know a villager's idea of plenty of money is not at all an extravagant one. Nobody knew where they came from; nobody knew where they went. Opinions in regard to their nationality were as varied as they were absurd. The child was then small, four or five years of age say, and must, therefore, be now a young lady of twenty or thereabouts."

"Did you make use of the picture?"

"No; I thought it best to satisfy myself by inquiries. Making allowance for the time that must have elapsed since the taking of the woman's picture and the settlement of Mistress Bourne in Elm Valley, the description of that lady tallies exactly with the picture. I think the original and the wanderer are the same."

"It looks like it."

Jocelyn gave a terrific yawn and consulted his watch.

"It's time for me to move," he said. "Where will I see you to-night, Neil?"

"Here. I am quite at leisure to-night."

"All right. Will you look after Brady this afternoon?"

"Yes. I have not much else on hand. By the bye, Rob, you spoiled a wedding for me last night."

"Did I? Sorry! How was it?"

"You remember Arteveldt?"

"The handsome blood that you introduced my first day in Chicago?"

"The same. He was married last night."

"Good Lord! I pity his wife."

By the bye, he married one of those 'pretty girls' he mentioned that day. I was going out with him, you remember, and threw over the engagement."

"I remember."

"Well, Arteveldt met his fate that night, and because of you, old man, I was not present at that meeting. He *married* her last night, and because of you, again, I have not yet seen the fair bride."

"Upon my word, Neil, I'm sorry."

"Well, you need not be. I was not over anxious about the matter. Arteveldt seems to have conceived a great liking for me, the Lord only knows why. He would have had me under his mother's roof all the time if he could. I had to be fussed over by his lady mamma because of the little service I happened to render him once. If you had not turned up I should have been at the wedding, if only to please Arteveldt. I had a sort of lop-sided liking for the fellow, although he was not just of my stripe."

"I should think not."

As Jocelyn said this he arose to prepare himself for departure.

"And, by the way, Neil, don't look for me very early to-night; I may take another spin after those 'shovers.' If anything keeps me later than, say midnight, will manage to let you know, however."

"All right, Rob; if you really won't stay any longer, I think *I* will take another nap."

As soon as the door closed behind Jocelyn the young detective threw himself down with a yawn. "Now for another snooze," he murmured, contentedly.

Scarcely were the words off his lips before there came to his ears the sound of hurried steps outside, and, in a moment, a hasty knock upon his door.

"Who's there?" called he, rising quickly.

"Mrs. Arteveldt's coachman," replied an agitated voice; "open, sir, o God's sake!"

Hurriedly Bathurst unlocked and opened the door, and the messenger, pale and breathless, fairly reeled into the room.

"Come quick, sir!" he gasped, without waiting to recover his breath. "She won't leave off screaming until you do! Come quick!"

"*Who* won't, Peter?" asked Bathurst, who instantly comprehended that something unusual had occurred. "Who wants me?"

"*She*, sir!" panted the man. "Missus Arteveldt."

Bathurst seized the man by the arm with a firm grip, and, pushing him towards a chair, said, with some sternness,

"Sit down and take breath—there,"—as the man obeyed him. "Now then, talk rationally! What has happened?"

"I will, sir; but you must come straight—Missus moans for you every breath—it's awful, sir. They came for us an hour ago. And when she got there and saw it—oh, but she did go mad! 'Send for Neil Bathurst,' she cries, '*he* will find who did it!' To think of it at such a time! And the first thing she thinks of is revenge!"

"Revenge! Man, what *do* you mean?"

"What I say. She will have the life of that beautiful creature. She wants *you* to find her."

Neil Bathurst sprang towards the man and shook him fiercely. "There, you old fool," he cried, angrily, and without letting go his hold, "stop ranting, and tell me the *exact* truth, *what has happened*, and none of *your* extras."

"Lord, I thought you *understood!*" howled the man, his teeth rattling like castanets. "This has happened: *Mr. Clarence has been murdered on his wedding night, and his wife has run away!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE DEATH BLOW.

NEIL BATHURST released his hold so suddenly that the man tumbled from his chair to the floor.

"Good God!" he cried; "can this be true?"

"Yes, yes; true as truth, sir," replied the man, gathering himself up with sudden alacrity. "Don't fly at me again, sir."

This request was quite unnecessary. The detective was darting about the room, completing his toilet with the rapidity that becomes second nature to men trained to be prepared always for emergencies.

"Start straight back, Peter," he said, without pausing in his work; "it's useless for you to try to return with me, your wind is too short; I shall be at the house before you. Stay, *where* is it—which house?"

"The new one, sir."

"Good! Now then, out with you, Peter; I am ready to go."

In another instant they were outside, and the detective, without casting so much as a glance at Peter, hurried away, and in a trice was out of the old man's sight. Twenty minutes later and he stood surveying the wreck of the bridal feast, while Peter was still twenty minutes distant.

Almost at the moment of the detective's appearance on the scene Mr. Hale had arrived, and pausing below for just a word, the two ascended the stairs and entered the room of horror. It was guarded by two policemen, and as Neil Bathurst appeared upon the threshold a piercing shriek rang through the room, and the mother of the murdered man rushed forward and flung herself upon him.

"Find her!" she cried, wildly. "Find her, and let us kill her as she killed him! You can! *He* said so! He said you were brave and wise!"

Like a flash there came to the remembrance of Neil Bathurst some words spoken by Clarence Arteveldt one day when they sat together at his mother's table. "Mother, if ever the time comes when you need the help of a detective, remember, Bathurst is the man to trust. What *he* can't accomplish is impossible." They had laughed at the words then. But now the frenzied mother had conceived the idea that Neil Bathurst could somehow right this wrong; that nothing must be done without him. The man who had been deemed so wise and all-powerful by her son became endowed with superhuman capabilities in the eyes of the mother. Neil Bathurst was quick to comprehend this, and to understand that, because of it, he could have a strong influence upon the frantic woman.

"I will find her, Mrs. Arteveldt," he said, in a low, firm tone, and without in the least comprehending her full meaning. "If you will aid me by doing as I wish I will be your helper."

"I will—I will!"

As she spoke her head fell back, and Neil caught her in his arms. For the first time during that horrible hour she had passed in the presence of her murdered son she had fainted.

"That's a mercy," said a little grey-faced man, coming forward. "It may be the saving of her reason; let's remove her to another room, quick."

They lifted her tenderly and bore her from the room, followed by Kate Seaton and a female servant who had stood trembling in the background.

"I will return shortly, gentlemen," said Doctor Worthing, the little grey man; and then the lawyer and Neil were left with the two policemen and the dead.

Without adddressing a word to them Neil Bathurst stepped softly to the bedside and pulled back the silken curtains. Clarence Arteveldt was lying upon his side, with his face turned away from the gazer; the eyes were closed, the features calm, the attitude that of repose. One hand was underneath the head, the slender fingers thrust in among the rings of dark hair; it was his usual attitude when sleeping. Thus he had slumbered in boyhood, when his heart was free from the guileful passions, the deceitful and treacherous impulses that had woven for him his doom. Thus he had slept, when, in later years, his dreams had been of fair women, of past carousals, of the madness of the gaming table, and his cheeks had been flushed with wine. Thus, now, he was sleeping the sleep of death. The attitude was that of repose, but the face was not the face of a sleeper. There was that awful bluish tinge about the mouth, and just back of the temple a single clot of blood The detective bent down and looked closely at this, and then recoiled with a cry of horror. That clot of blood marked the smallest of wounds, where some sharp, slender instrument had been driven deep, penetrating to the brain.

The lawyer, in his turn, bent above the body, and then the four men looked at each other in silence. Mr. Hale had been hastily summoned, and knew as little concerning the tragedy as did the detective.

At length one of the policemen spoke.

"You are Neil Bathurst, the detective?" he asked, turning towards that young man, who nodded silently.

"Then you will be prime mover here; she, the old lady, has been taking on fearfully about you; she expects you to find the party that did this."

Even there the detective could feel annoyed; he had held himself, as much as possible, aloof from the members of the police force, and few of them knew him, save by name. "Bathurst, the detective," was often enough discussed at police headquarters, but he had scrupulously avoided giving them a sight of his face. The detective of fiction may stalk through the streets known of all men. The skilful and useful detective of reality conceals his identity as much as may be; knowing that to court publicity is to become a marked man, and to cripple his chances of success among the people, with whom he must necessarily deal "incog." He foresaw for himself a little too much publicity in this present case. But it was too late to amend that now. So after a moment's pause he asked,—

"Is any one suspected?"

"*Suspected!* I should think so; why, it's a clear case," replied the officer.

"Who is it, then, if the matter is certain?"

"I reckon it's *certain* enough; she ran away last night, and can't be found."

"*What!*" turning upon the man quickly; "do you mean *his wife?*"

"That's what I mean."

At this moment the little doctor bustled in.

"I take it that you are the detective, sir," he said, going straight up to Bathurst.

"Yes."

"Then I must tell you that much depends on you. Whatever you think, pray exert as soothing an influence as possible upon Mrs. Arteveldt; she has unbounded faith in you, and her grief has all turned into the, not uncommon, channel of revenge. If you do not assure her that you will find the murderess, and *keep* her assured of it, she may lose life or reason. On this subject she is already a monomaniac."

The little doctor paused as abruptly as he had begun, and then the detective, who had listened soberly, turned towards Mr. Hale.

"If I understood the servant aright, you are Mrs. Arteveldt's lawyer, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I am her lawyer; my name is Hale," replied Mrs. Arteveldt's adviser, gravely.

"Then you are the one to take the lead here; all that comes within the scope of my profession I will readily undertake, both for his mother's sake," motioning towards the bed, "and for his own. What is known about this terrible affair?" turning again towards the officers.

"Not much," replied the spokesman, "except that all the servants and the rest agree that his wife killed him. There was some sort of a scene here last night before all the wedding guests, and in the excitement the bride disappeared. He," jerking his thumb towards the bed, "drank heavily and went sort of wild. He made one of the servants lie down beside him, and when the fellow awoke this morning his master lay just as he does now."

The detective pondered a moment and then asked, "Has a coroner been summoned?"

"Yes," replied Doctor Worthing; "I sent for him just before you two arrived."

"Has anything been moved or disturbed in this room?" turning to the policeman.

"No, sir," replied the man; "*I* have looked out for that."

"Then, gentlemen, let us go into the next room; rather do you go, while I make

a minute examination here, taking care to disturb nothing. Then we will try and arrange our ideas concerning this mystery; for it looks a mystery to me. We can do little more than this until after the inquest."

"I think I can give our ideas the right impetus," said Mr. Hale, as they turned to leave the room in accordance with the request of the detective. "I was a witness to the strange scene of last night."

Bathurst nodded, and the four men filed from the room. Left alone, the detective examined everything within the room with the utmost care—but all to no purpose. There was not the slightest trace of anything that might be taken as a clue upon which to work, no sign to indicate how the destroyer entered that room or departed from it. Standing beside the bed, he again gazed down upon the corpse.

"Arteveldt's wife was supposed to be merely a beautiful village girl," he mused, half aloud. "If this is true, she never struck *that* blow. No inexperienced hand could make its aim so unerring and deadly." So saying, he turned and went softly out from the chamber of death.

On the threshold he met Kate Seaton.

"Will you please come to Mrs. Arteveldt, sir," she said, with a half sob. "We can do nothing with her, her nerves are in a most unnatural state. Pray use your will to quiet her."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CORONER'S VERDICT.

THAT was a long, sad, wearisome day for the young detective. For two long hours he sat beside the couch of Mrs. Arteveldt, holding her hands, listening to her moans of anguish, that were alternated with fierce outcries for vengeance upon her son's murderer, soothing, persuading, and finally, controlling. At last, having obtained from her a promise that she would remain quiet, and obey the doctor's orders, he arose to leave her.

"Remember," he said, as he stood beside the couch, "how necessary it is that you recover perfect self-control. If I go out upon this search you must be able to receive and understand my reports; remember I am serving under you. With the assistance of your lawyer you should be able to help me by your advice and counsel. This is *your* search; you must not be wanting in strength to carry it on."

It was wonderful the effect his words had upon her. Wonderful to see the confidence she reposed in him during this terrible trial. No other voice could calm her, no one else influence her in the least.

"I will be strong. I will not give up until *she* is found," she said. "Tell the doctor I will take what he pleases to give me."

This was indeed a concession, and Kate hastily summoned Doctor Worthing.

The detective now joined the lawyer, and from his lips obtained a concise account of the scene of the previous night. He listened in silence, and at the end of the narration asked,

"Will you tell me your exact impression at the time, Mr. Hale? When the bride was delivering her strange address how did you feel towards her?"

"To be honest, I felt as though she were speaking the truth, and I think this feeling was general; in fact, the countenance of the man, now dead, told its own story. I don't think any one doubted that he had dealt unfairly by her."

Bathurst pondered in silence for a moment, and then said, "You are a lawyer. You understand human nature. Do you think this theory of the murder is the right one?"

"I don't see grounds for a different or a better one. The evidence is all against her."

"The evidence; yes, circumstantial evidence."

"True. And yet—her own words would convict her. You must consider she had matured her plans, weeks in advance, perhaps; see how suddenly and effectually she has disappeared. This thirst for revenge must have become a monomania with her."

"It is possible."

"But—you think it improbable?"

"No. It is the most probable of theories, and yet—I should be but a poor detective did I allow myself to jump at once to the most *probable* conclusion. While there is room for a doubt there is room for search in other directions. I have seen men pursued whose guilt looked still more probable, and because the easiest theory was adopted by all the actual criminal has escaped."

"Upon my word, young man, you are a sound reasoner. May I be allowed to ask what you intend to do?"

"Assuredly. I shall do nothing until the farce—beg pardon, I mean the inquest, is over. After that, you, being Mrs. Arteveldt's adviser, will, of course, examine my reports, and be fully aware of my movements."

The lawyer made no answer, and

appeared lost in thought. Presently the detective walked across the room, and, throwing himself down upon a couch, reviewed in his mind all that he had ever heard of Lenore Arteveldt. After all, it was very little. He had gathered from the ravings of Mrs. Arteveldt some idea of the first visit paid by that lady to Lenore, and of the effort made to induce the girl to renounce Clarence. If he could only get a fair, unprejudiced account of that interview! But that was impossible, at least for the present.

"It seems as if Fate *had* been against my meeting that girl," he mused. "If I could have seen her I should know how to judge her, perhaps. It's a match for Jocelyn's murder case; only I have not the advantage of the painted eye. Well, I must await the result of the inquest; then, if the destroyer of Clarence Arteveldt is to be found, I will hunt down her or him, as the case may be."

The inquest was of short duration; the evidence was unimpeachable and to the point, the jury unanimous in their decision. Mr. Hale and several others testified as to the supper-table scene, and there was not the slightest variation in their testimony. One after another they repeated the criminating words of the wronged bride: "This evening has witnessed *your* triumph; *to-night* and all the future shall witness mine. *When to-morrow dawns, let these your friends and guests say whether or no your wife has avenged herself.*"

John Riley, the body servant of the murdered man, described the scene in the bridal chamber, told how the victim had raved of his wife, how he had declared that she wanted to murder him, how he had laid down upon the bride's pillow, commanded the lights to be lowered and the curtains drawn close, and then compelled him (John) to lie down beside him; how Clarence had covered him carefully and then laid himself down, saying, "I shall sleep now." "After that," testified John, "I fell asleep—I didn't mean to, but he had been fidgety all day, and I had been unusually worked; besides, it was long after midnight. I had not intended lying down, and the door was not locked. I didn't know any more until someone shook me and spoke in my ear. When I opened my eyes Philip, the footman, was standing over me. He had promised to come in and relieve me before daylight, but he had gone to sleep, and overslept, too. I jumped up then, and drew back the curtains to take a look at my master—— Gentlemen, he lay then just as you see him now, cold and dead. I don't remember any more, gentlemen—the thought that I had been lying there beside a corpse came over me like a flash; I sickened, and fell down in a faint."

The testimony of Philip, the footman, corroborated that of John Riley. Philip seemed to be a man of some nerve and sense.

"I was so shocked," he said, "that for a full five minutes I never stirred foot or hand; then I sort of came to my senses and dragged John out into the hall, where I doused him with water, and left him lying there, while I ran to arouse all the servants. I sent one for policemen, and, when they came, put two in this room; then I went for the doctor and Mr. Hale. If it hadn't been that I had served in Mrs. Arteveldt's house I should not have known what to do or who to send after. I sent the coachman for the doctor and lawyer, and then I shook John into his senses, and sent him for Mrs. Arteveldt. You may say that was wrong, but *I* knew that she would never forgive any of us if we took a single step before sending for her. I made the women servants keep downstairs, and kept everybody out of the house except the police. When Mrs. Arteveldt came I obeyed her, and sent for Mr. Bathurst. I sent her coachman, and the old fool ran away on foot when he might have gone with the carriage in half the time."

After receiving all the testimony the jury consulted for a short time, and then returned the verdict fully expected by Bathurst: Deceased had met his death "at the hands of his wife, Lenore Armyn Arteveldt."

"There," he muttered, when at last the unpleasant ceremony was done, and the last juryman had vacated the premises. "Now *I* can begin."

He began by dropping his head upon his hands and sitting thus for nearly an hour. Then he roused himself and drew forth a note-book, in which he made several entries. This done, he went down to the library and summoned a servant. Philip, the footman, answered his ring.

"Come in, Philip," he said, affably. "You are a shrewd fellow. I want to ask you a question or two."

Philip bowed like a courtier, and stood "at ease."

"I want you to describe to me this runaway bride. Can you tell me how she looked? I have never seen her."

"She looked like a picture, sir," replied Philip, with animation. "One wouldn't ever suspect her of killing anyone—at least not if they didn't see her as she looked *that night*. Then her eyes blazed enough to

stab you through and through, and she looked as if she could be afraid of nothing. She was shortish, sir, and walked sort of graceful and swinging, but awful proud; stepped as if the ground was not quite good enough. The first time I saw her she made me think of a story I read somewhere, about some great man spreading down his cloak for some queen to walk over. Well, *she* walked as if she had been used to stepping on great men's cloaks all her life. She didn't have much colour, only in her lips, and they were as red as could be, and just like a bow. Her hair was all full of ripples, and was a kind of yellowish-red, and her eyes looked almost yellow too, sometimes; clear, you know, like Mrs. Arteveldt's old amber wine. I am afraid I have not done her justice, sir. She was a regular beauty, and no mistake."

The detective could scarcely suppress a smile as he listened to this unique description.

"Thank you, Philip," he said, making an entry in his note-book. "Now then, who was the first to connect this lady with her husband's death?"

"Why, sir, now I think of it, nobody thought about who did it until Mrs. Arteveldt came. *She* knew in an instant, and we all wondered at our stupidity in not thinking of it ourselves."

"To be sure," said the detective, with a queer intonation; "can you tell me precisely what your first thought was, when Mrs. Arteveldt accused her son's wife of the murder."

"Why, sir, as true as I live, I was shocked just for a minute. Then I saw the sense of the thing. It was no burglar, for nothing was stolen."

"Nothing was stolen, eh? Well, now, Philip, you may send John Riley here."

Philip bowed himself out, and presently John Riley approached. The same questions were put to him, and after him to every servant in the house in turn. As the detective dismissed them he charged each one to say nothing of his business with them, and then he sent to ask if Miss Kate Seaton could grant him an interview.

CHAPTER XX.

A LETTER IN THE GRATE.

In a very short time the door again opened, and Miss Seaton herself entered the room.

"I am so glad you sent for me, Mr. Bathurst," she said, coming straight towards him. "Mrs. Arteveldt is sleeping now, under the influence of Doctor Worthing's opiates. But when she wakens I fancy it will be difficult for you to hold interviews with any one, except in her presence. She has become possessed of the idea that she must have a hand in everything, and—I wanted to talk with you alone."

"I suppose you have me to thank for inspiring Mrs. Arteveldt with the idea that her aid is indispensable," replied the detective, bringing forward a chair, which she promptly accepted. "She must have something to keep her from going quite mad. Miss Seaton!" this with sudden surprise, "good heavens, how pale you look!"

"I have not closed my eyes since Lenore's strange flight, sir."

"What! you passed a sleepless night, and ever since have been by that poor woman, and in this house of horror. You will certainly be ill." He arose quickly and rang the bell. "Bring some wine for Miss Seaton," he said to the prompt Philip.

The wine was brought, and Miss Seaton drank it without so much as the ceremony of an objection.

"Now we will talk," said the detective, seating himself near her. "I want a little help from you, Miss Seaton."

The girl looked startled.

"Not—to hunt down Lenore?" she almost gasped.

"Not to hunt her down. You were her friend, I am told?"

"I *am* her friend, Mr. Bathurst. I wanted to talk with you about Lenore—and, that shameful coroner's verdict. I want you to believe that Lenore Armyn is not a murderess."

"What, in the face of all the evidence? Do you believe her innocent?"

"In the face of all the evidence! In the face of everything. *I do!*" said Kate, excitedly.

"But—what of her words of last night, Miss Seaton?"

"Her words! I believe now that Lenore fully intended to run away on her bridal night. I believe that was the revenge she had planned, and that she alluded to. Now, when it is too late, I can recall many things that should have aroused my suspicions; but I tell you that if Lenore is alive to night she is as ignorant of the truth concerning this murder as you or I."

"If she is alive! You don't think she would take her own life?"

"I don't know. I can see now how worthless life must have seemed to her. I can conceive how she might throw away her own existence, but not that she could rob another of his."

"That is to say, you can imagine yourself under similar circumstances taking refuge in a suicide's grave. Women invariably judge others of their own sex by themselves."

Kate Seaton coloured.

"I have not been able to gain much of an idea of Mrs. Lenore Arteveldt," went on the detective, "but from what I have heard I should say that she was not the person to destroy herself;" then in a lower and more earnest tone, "Miss Seaton, I sent for you this evening to ask for information concerning her. I was not aware that you was so firmly her friend, or that you doubted her guilt. As for me, my first task is to find her, my next to prove her guilty or innocent. Rest assured that if she be innocent she shall never suffer at my hands. I want to get a correct idea of her, and depend on your memory to aid me. Will you tell me, as briefly as you can, all that you can recall of your friend since first you knew her?"

"Yes," replied she, "for by so doing I shall help, not damage, her cause."

Beginning at the time when she had first known Lenore at the young ladies' school, Kate related reminiscence after reminiscence of the beautiful fugitive; told of her beauty, her brilliancy, her wit, her affectionateness, her impulsive generosity. She dwelt upon Lenore's fierce hatred of shams and deceit, of trickery, treachery, and all manner of petty meanness; told how she was ever the champion of the right and the oppressed; of the weak, and those mentally deficient. Suddenly she paused; in telling of Lenore's championship she must needs say too much concerning the fierce, fiery temper, perhaps indirectly she had already said too much. She reflected for a moment, for in espousing the cause of her friend little Kate Seaton was becoming wise as a serpent. The detective, who had been making notes from time to time, looked up as she ceased speaking, but did not urge her to proceed, seeming, like herself, to be occupied with his own thoughts. At last Kate looked up.

"I suppose you are beginning a systematic investigation?" she said, seriously.

"Yes."

"And—will you question others besides me concerning Lenore?"

The detective began to see her drift. "Assuredly," he said. "I begin with you because I wanted some information from those not prejudiced against her. I shall eventually have to interview those who will picture her in a more lurid light."

"You—you intend to talk with Mrs. Warren—and Miss VanBuren?"

"The women she denounced as accomplices with Arteveldt?"

"Yes."

"I shall see them, of course."

"Then I may as well forestall them; they will put poor Lenore's faults into the worst dress possible," and she hastened to give a full account of Lenore's attack upon the German wife-beater.

The detective listened with keenest interest. "What!" he exclaimed, "did she actually strike the man down?"

"She actually did, and he certainly deserved it. I have told you this because I know they will make capital of Lenore's furious temper, and use it against her. Jess Warren ran screaming home, and told my sister that the police had arrested Lenore. We got there just in time to hear her, and Lenore, who was trembling with anger, said some very cutting things to Jess. I think that was the foundation of Jess Warren's hatred for her. Now, let me tell you all I know concerning the inveigling of poor Lenore into a gambler's den," and she hurriedly related the little that she knew concerning that shameful plot, together with the suspicions, amounting almost to certainties, that were the natural result of Lenore's spirited denunciation of the previous evening.

"I never really liked, or trusted, Mrs. Warren," she concluded. "And my aversion for Miss VanBuren was second only to Lenore's dislike for her. Let me suggest, Mr. Bathurst, that you do not lose too much time, if you are determined to see Jess. I am very much mistaken in my brother-in-law if he allows her to remain under his roof."

"I shall certainly lose no time," replied he, smiling a little; "and now, will you favour me with a description of the person of this mysterious bride?"

Kate gave him a vivid, glowing, thoroughly womanly word picture of Lenore; and then the detective said:

"Thank you, Miss Seaton; I will detain you no longer. By the way, can you tell me if the bachelor effects of the deceased are still in his old room at his mother's house?"

"They are, I believe. He had not ordered the removal of anything except his wardrobe."

"Well, I must visit that room to-night."

"To-night!"

"Yes. It is now seven o'clock; I must run out for a few moments, meantime may I depend upon you to speak to Mr. Hale when he comes? If I have not returned by that time ask him to get the necessary keys, and, if possible, without disturbing

Mrs. Arteveldt. And to-night you must rest, even if I have to take your place at the bedside.

"You? But you are worn out like myself."

"Nonsense! I slept last night, remember. Besides, I am trained to endure loss of sleep."

"It's an odd position for a detective," said Kate, wearily. "But I may have to take you at your word. If she does not waken much calmed the others would find her unmanageable."

"I'm a capital nurse," smiled the detective. "Trust me, you shall rest to-night; and now I will go, and you shall lie in wait for Mr. Hale."

A few more words, and then they separated, Kate going back to her charge, with weary limbs, aching head, and a sad heart; and Neil Bathurst hastening towards his own apartments, where, if he did not find him already there, he must leave a message for Jocelyn.

"I shall have to come the old woman dodge, and pin a piece of paper on the door, telling where I am and all about it," thought Neil, with a half laugh, as he approached his rooms.

He had hoped to find Jocelyn, or that he would come soon.

"I shall need his help, perhaps," he muttered, putting his key in the lock. "If I leave the city I shall want Rob to look out for things hereabouts."

He pushed open the door and entered, striking a match at almost the same instant. Reaching up he lighted the gas, and then turned to close the door. As it swung forward his eye fell upon a yellow envelope that had evidently been pushed under from without. Picking it up he saw that it was a telegram, and opening it wonderingly, his eyes fell upon these words:

OLD MAN.—B. and self have gone into the country; length of stay not known. Write later.—ROB.

The message was dated from a station some ten miles out, on the Michigan Central Road.

"What luck!" ejaculated the detective. "Jocelyn is worse than Paddy's flea. Well, my business here is done, I think, and no need to pin the old woman's tag to the door. 'B. and self have gone to the country,' that's Rob all over. Brady must have had news from his private inquirer."

Holding the telegram up to the gas flame, he watched it crumbled to ashes, and then turning out his light, locked his door and retraced his steps. Almost within the same hour he sat alone in Clarence Arteveldt's old dressing-room carefully examining the contents of a costly desk.

There were horribly scrawled notes from *bon vivants*, and horsey notes from well known jockeys, scores of billets from fair ladies; many photographs, and—of course—some locks of hair.

He turned over the photographs; there were pictures of prominent actresses and vocalists; some of ladies with questionable faces, and many of ladies who, probably at one time or another, had enjoyed the brief adoration of the young man, once so fascinating, now shorn of all his charms and sleeping his last sleep. From these he turned to the *billet doux*. It took a long time to master their contents, and so much sweetness was a trifle nauseating; nevertheless he kept on. Having perused them all, he singled out one from the mass, muttering, as he re-opened it,

"This has a slightly different flavour; but after all, doesn't mean much, perhaps."

The note was in a fine, but firm, woman's hand, and was without address or signature. It ran thus:

"I begin to doubt you. Don't think me blind, or that I am one to submit to neglect, *after what has been*. Remember, you are not dealing with one friendless or helpless; I must see you *to-night*.

"August 9th, 187—."

"No signature, no address," he murmured, "and bearing date only three months back. I will keep this."

He put it carefully in his pocket, and arose to examine the closets and dressing-cases.

From the pocket of a coat, which hung in a small wardrobe, he drew a few letters. He instantly recognized the garment as one Arteveldt had worn when last he saw him. And glancing at the dates of the letters he saw that they were very recent.

"That must be the coat he discarded to put on the wedding garment. Poor fellow! better if he had continued to wear this coat," he said, looking at it ruefully. "Now for these letters."

There were several bills from upholsterers and tradesmen, and from one of these a smaller missive dropped. Picking it up hastily, he glanced at the superscription. "How is this?" he exclaimed, at the same time diving in his pocket for the note he had just stowed away. "Ah!" glancing from one to the other. "It *is* the same writing, and dated—just four days ago."

Thus ran the second billet:

"I have seen the girl you think to make

your wife. And she *does not love you*—I swear it. I have warned you before. I repeat that warning. Break off this marriage even at the last moment. Break it off—or the thunderbolt that hangs over you will fall."

"Is this a threat or a warning?" said the detective, musingly; "the first billet embodies a threat, and whichever way this may be intended *the thunderbolt has fallen.*"

He put the two notes carefully in his pocket and resumed his investigations.

Every pocket of every garment was searched, but nothing more could be discovered.

Approaching the grate, the quick eye of the detective saw something which made him start forward suddenly. Evidently the late occupant of the room had been burning papers on the last evening of his tenantship. The remains of that last fire had not yet been cleared away, and down there among the charred dead embers a scrap of scorched paper was visible. The detective seized it and scanned it eagerly. It was the fragment of a letter in the unmistakable handwriting of Clarence Arteveldt. The upper half of the sheet and a portion of the lower had been burned away, so that a part only of the concluding lines were preserved, making of course incomplete sense.

The fragments of lines read as follows:

"——this day returned your ——and gifts. Have retained nothing —— these useless threats – the admiration your beauty commands—position warrants. I shall be your friend——two must not meet."

This fragment bore no signature, and the detective was quick to connect it with the other unsigned notes.

"This looks business-like," said he to himself. "If one could only get at the meaning of these documents. This last, which sounds like an answer to the one of recent date, would indicate that the writer of that one *did* mean a threat rather than a warning. If it is a threat, then the plot thickens; it would seem that poor Arteveldt had injured more than one woman, and that he had more than one enemy."

He finished his search, but without making further discoveries, and then closing the room and locking it carefully he left the house in the possession of Mrs. Arteveldt's old and tried housekeeper and the under servants, and hastened back to that other house of gloom.

Yesterday those two elegant dwellings had been glowing with colour, and gay with preparations for bridal festivities. Surely never was wedding so swiftly followed by desolation and gloom. Only twenty-four hours have passed, and the curtains are drawn, stillness and desolation are everywhere. The servants have cast away their wedding favours, as if they were living deadly things, and go about with white, scared faces. The second act of Clarence Arteveldt's drama closes on a murdered bridegroom, a fugitive bride, a half-crazed mother, and horror in the hearts of all beholders.

CHAPTER XXI.

STARTLING NEWS, STRANGELY RECEIVED.

On reaching that other house of gloom the detective goes straight to the room where Mrs. Arteveldt lies in a half stupor, and Kate Seaton sits wearily watching.

Opening the door softly he signals the girl to come out to him, and noiselessly, without disturbing her charge, Kate obeys.

"I must have a word with you," he says, as they stand together under the dimly burning hall chandelier. "I will be as brief as possible. Can you sit on that hall chair — uncomfortable looking thing—and answer a few more questions?"

She bowed, and, with a sigh of utter weariness, sank upon the seat designated.

"We are quite alone here," he said, looking about him, "as safe from interruption as if closeted in the library. Now, then, please answer my questions frankly. I am now seeking for evidence that will turn suspicion away from your friend, not for evidence against her."

Kate Seaton started up eagerly.

"Oh! is it *possible,*" she cried—"is there anything that may be used in her favour?"

"It is possible," he replied, gravely. "I won't say as to the probability, however; that's another thing. But a detective must neglect no shadow of evidence for or against. If we could prove that Clarence Arteveldt had another enemy—if we could prove that another had breathed out threats against him, don't you see that your friend's case would look a shade less dark?"

"Yes. Oh, yes!"

"Then don't ask useless questions, but believe that all I do has its meaning. First, have you some of the bride's writing in your possession?"

"Yes; we were correspondents after I left school."

"In those letters did she mention any

friends whom she especially trusted or felt a regard for?"

"Do you mean any lover?"

"I mean—any one."

"I am sure Lenore never had a lover until she came to the city, her mother guarded her so jealously. After her mother's death she did sometimes speak of a Doctor Austin, who was some sort of a guardian over her property, and in whom her mother had reposed fullest confidence."

"Doctor Austin! Did he live in the same village with her mother?"

"Yes, sir; he lived and, of course, still lives at Fairlie."

"You think that your friend trusted this Doctor Austin?"

"I know she did."

"Miss Seaton, I must ask for one or two of your friend's letters—those referring to this doctor; and it would aid me very much in forming correct conclusions if you would allow me to peruse the entire correspondence, on her side."

Kate hesitated a moment and then arose.

"Yes," she said; "I *will* let you see Lenore's letters. They are gems; as I said before, they will help her cause, not hurt it—and ah, she needs help."

"Yes; she needs help. When may I have the letters?"

"To-morrow. They are locked in my desk at the other house."

"Thank you. Now, please use your memory. Did Miss Armyn have any female acquaintances — in the city—of course—who were strangers to you?"

"No; I am sure she did not."

"You went out together usually?"

"Nearly always."

"In your walks or drives did she ever meet and converse with a strange woman? Did you ever, at any time, since her engagement to Clarence Arteveldt especially, know of her meeting with a stranger?"

For a moment Kate seems thinking intently, then a light breaks over her countenance.

"Why, yes. I do remember now," she exclaims; "I admitted the woman myself."

"Tell me about it," eagerly.

"I will. It was one night, a little more than a week before this awful marriage—rather it was early in the evening, not yet fairly dark. It was raining, and the wind was blowing dismally. I remember thinking, when I opened the door, that it could be no pleasure caller who came out in such a storm. The hall was dimly lighted, and I could not see her plainly; but it was a woman—a lady, I should judge. She spoke in a very low voice, and was completely muffled in a huge cloak and thick veil. She was not tall—just a little higher than I, perhaps. She asked for Lenore, and I left her in the parlour and went up to Lenore's room. When I told her that a veiled stranger was down stairs she seemed surprised, and then started to go down, saying, in that scornful way of hers, 'A veiled stranger, in a blowing storm! Bah! another farce, I suppose.' I wondered then what she could mean; but she had been so haughty and reserved of late that I never dared question her about any of her odd sayings. The stranger stayed perhaps twenty minutes, and Lenore herself conducted her out. As she closed the door and came slowly up the stairs again I heard her laugh the low, scornful laugh that was all the mirth we had ever heard from her lips since that fatal engagement. She never mentioned the woman or the object of her visit, and no one liked to question her."

"And that is all you can tell me?"

"That is all."

"Thank you, Miss Seaton. Now I am going to take your place by Mrs. Arteveldt; she will be wide awake soon, and you must go and rest."

It is useless to oppose him; Kate sees that, and she breathes a sigh of thankfulness as she goes to seek the repose she so much needs.

As Neil Bathurst takes her place by the bedside of the woman, who slumbers as if in a trance, then wakes suddenly, to rave, and cry piteously, for the dead idol lying so motionless not far away, his face is shadowed, his brows are contracted, his lips compressed. He bends the whole strength of his splendid intellect to the solution of a strange, knotty, woful problem. While the detective watches and ponders let us look in upon some of the inmates of the Durand mansion.

In her green and glittering *boudoir* the lovely heiress of the Durand wealth reclines upon a satin-covered couch that is drawn forward to catch the warmth from a glowing grate fire. The room is brilliantly illuminated, not with the too glaring gas, but with the soft light from many wax candles, that are upheld by numerous costly and quaint candelabra. Aura Durand is a thorough sybarite, and she knows better than to mar the green loveliness of her naiad's grotto with the cold glare of the gas jets. She has not left her couch all day, and her silly little maid has been kept constantly at her side. No one else has been admitted to her room. Hours have passed since the body of the murdered bridegroom was discovered, and the entire city has rung with the news, but it has not

penetrated to the *boudoir* of Aura Durand. Neither is she aware of the scene of last night, and of the flight of Lenore. Fussy, fidgety, nervous little Mrs. Durand could not tell her; tender-hearted Mr. Durand would not, so it has been delegated to Miss Annin to break to her the news. Mrs. Durand has kept her room all day, only sending to ask after Aura, and Mr. Durand has only presented himself long enough to make the regulation inquiries, and since has kept aloof from the feminine portion of the house.

"Aura is so sensitive," he says, "and she and poor Arteveldt were such good friends. It will be a shock to her."

Perhaps Miss Annin also feared the shock to Miss Durand's nerves; at all events, she had held herself aloof from Aura all that day, and at ten o'clock at night her task of disagreeable news breaking is yet to be accomplished. Perhaps Miss Annin is one of those conscientious young ladies who cannot sleep leaving a duty unperformed. For now, late as is the hour, she enters the green *boudoir*, without knocking, and unannounced. An expression of annoyance flits across the face of the invalid, and then she says, with almost her usual calm,

"Oh, it's you! Where have you been all day?"

Miss Annin crosses the room in her easy fashion and seats herself comfortably where she can have a full view of the invalid's face.

"I've been—making a mental calculation," she replies coolly. "Isn't Laura tired?" with a meaning glance; "she looks as if it would do her good to run down to the kitchen and get a cup of tea. You had better go, Laura."

For a moment it would seem that Laura's mistress will countermand this advice, which amounts to an order. Then she seems to reconsider and says, languidly, "You may go, Laura—for a little while."

Laura murmurs her thanks, and is glad to go, and for a moment Miss Durand and her companion eye each other in silence; a silence which Miss Annin is the first to break.

"How is your poor ankle?" she asks, with mocking solicitude. The invalid stirs impatiently, but vouchsafes no answer, asking a question instead.

"Have you been out to-day?"

"No," carelessly.

"What! You are taking things quietly. I thought you were getting impatient."

"So I was. I have had other things to occupy me to-day."

Miss Durand eyes her coldly.

"If you have anything to say you had better say it," she says, with a half sneer.

"What a queer girl you are," with an affectation of intense astonishment. "If I have anything to say! Don't you want to hear about the wedding?"

"No," shutting her eyes as if the light hurt them.

"But it was a very strange one."

"No matter."

"*Such* a finale!"

Miss Durand says nothing; her face looks very white under the wax lights.

"And such a furore as it created. No one ever before saw such a demoniac-looking bride. And then—her horrible revenge."

Aura Durand lifts her head suddenly.

"*What* are you talking about?" she cries, almost wildly.

"About the bride who denounced her husband, and ran away on her wedding night. About the beautiful demon who is missing two hours after the wedding, and who cannot be found, although she has left a terrible 'farewell' behind her."

Aura Durand sits erect; her face is fairly livid.

"Ran away! Missing!" she almost shrieks. "What do you mean? Explain instantly, *instantly!*"

"Then don't glare at me so wildly. I am not the awful bride. Lie down and don't excite yourself. You will only injure your foot moving so carelessly," said Miss Annin, maliciously. "I mean what I say. Clarence Arteveldt's wife stood before her guests at her wedding feast, and declared that she had been *entrapped* into the marriage; declared that she loathed the man beside her; that she would never live with him; that his eyes should never look upon her face again. She called on heaven to witness her words, and swore that to-day all the world should know how she had avenged herself. Then she vanished, as if the earth had opened and swallowed her."

"You lie! *You lie!*"

The words are almost a shriek. Again the form of the invalid becomes suddenly erect. She looks as if she were going wild.

"I wouldn't!" Miss Annin speaks in a low, steady tone, and looks her straight in the eye. "One would think you were deeply interested. It looks bad."

Something in the words, or the look, or the tone, causes the invalid to sink suddenly back among her cushions, and to lie there motionless and silent for some moments. When she speaks again all the expression has gone out of her face, all the intensity out of her voice.

"Tell me what you mean? I believe you are trying to annoy me."

"No; this is too terrible a thing to jest about." Miss Annin draws her chair nearer the couch as she speaks, and then, with her eyes fixed upon Aura's face, tells the story of the bride's denunciation and disappearance, concluding thus,

"The bride was not seen after, but—last night Clarence Arteveldt, half crazed with grief and wine, lay down upon the couch prepared for his bride—and this morning was found—a corpse."

"WHAT!" The voice is very low this time, but full of horror unutterable.

"I repeat it; Clarence Arteveldt was murdered last night."

"My God!" Again that horror-stricken tone. Miss Annin gazes and gazes, but the face is locked in sphinx-like calm. Only the voice betrays emotion, and she does not hear that again. Miss Durand lies like a statue under her gaze. A puzzled expression comes into the face of Miss Annin. She draws from her pocket a folded paper, and throws it upon the couch.

"There," she says, in an almost sullen tone, "there is the evening paper; read for yourself."

"Thank you."

Miss Annin rises and moves towards the door. "Shall I send Laura?" she asks, rather ungraciously.

"No."

"Then good-night."

No answer; Miss Durand does not so much as glance towards her. When the door has closed behind her, however, the heiress springs up again, and clutches at the paper.

"It can't be! It *can't!*" she whispers, in horrified aspirates. But her eyes fall upon the awful head-lines. It is all there; it is true. With a moan of anguish she flings the paper from her; and then the crippled heiress stands erect in the middle of the beautiful room; her eyes are distended, her face is livid, ghastly, horrible,—there is not a trace of beauty there.

"He dead! He murdered! Clarence, my Clarence, lying lifeless and cold! Oh, I am going mad! *His* life sacrificed, and she escaped! Horror! *horror!* She escaped! *She*—his murderess! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!!"

She flings her arms aloft; she writhes like a serpent. Then, with that awful, maniac laughter upon her lips, falls senseless.

Instantly the door is flung open; so prompt is the action that one would think that the intruder could not have been far from the keyhole. It is Miss Annin, and she bends over the prostrate form with a look of cold, critical scrutiny. Closer she bends, and then puts her fingers over the heart and pulse of the insensible heiress. This done, she lifts her face and stands erect, wearing that baffled look once more.

"This is genuine!" she mutters; "and—I don't understand it."

She rings the bell then; help comes, and they set to work to restore their fainting mistress. She remains unconscious a long time; so long that they become alarmed. But at last she revives, and opening her eyes suddenly looks about her. When at last she speaks the look on Nina Annin's face tells that the words are not what she had expected, or hoped, to hear.

"Did I—faint?" she murmurs, in the lowest and softest of tones. "Yes, I remember; I tried to get up, and—my foot failed me." Then she closed her eyes, and seemed to fall asleep. After a time, Nina Annin turned to Laura.

"Someone ought to remain near Miss Durand," she said, kindly; "and you are too tired; go and rest now, and I will lie down on that couch, and be ready if she needs anything. You must, Laura, I insist upon it."

With seeming reluctance, and inward gladness, Laura goes, and Miss Annin begins her vigil beside the sleeper. All night long Aura Durand lies with closed eyes, and calm, upturned face; she moves a little sometimes, as sleepers will, but, although Miss Annin steals to the bedside fifty times during the night, although sometimes she bends very near, and waves a wax light from one of the candelabra in the very eyes of the sleeper, although—accidentally, of course—she overturns something, or makes some sudden noise near the bedside, Aura never once opens her eyes, or gives evidence by any restlessness that her repose is in the least disturbed.

At last morning dawns, and Miss Annin, pale and weary with her vigil, is about to steal from the room, when the voice of Miss Durand calls "Laura," and then, as she turns involuntarily, "Oh, it's you, Miss Annin; how came you about so early?"

"I have been here all night," replied Miss Annin, coming to the bedside; "you were so restless, and I thought it best not to leave Laura with you."

Miss Durand actually laughed. "You were very thoughtful. But I have had a good night's sleep, I think. Was I very restless?"

"Very."

"Ah!" with a queer gleam in her eye. "Then I must have disturbed you more or less. Please ring for Laura, I want some breakfast."

Miss Annin summoned the maid and

then betook herself to her own room, sleepy and disappointed.

"What a fool," muttered Miss Durand, when Miss Annin had left the room; then reaching out for a little hand mirror that lay near, she surveyed her face critically.

"I think I look very well, considering that I have not slept at all," she soliloquised. "What a satisfaction it was to hear that girl fidgeting about all night. I have done some needful thinking too—but the strain was very wearing; I must rest to-day—after I have settled with her."

While she breakfasted she penned a hasty note and sent it away by a messenger. Then Laura attired her in a bewitching *négligé*, and she lay down upon her couch and waited. An hour later the footman came to the door and presented a card.

"Show him up instantly," commanded Miss Durand, glancing at it hastily; then as the servant retired, "Laura, if Miss Annin should come from her room keep her away from here; tell her that I am sleeping."

A moment later and Mr. George Fordham entered the boudoir. He looked flushed and annoyed; Lenore's denunciation had made him unpleasantly notorious, and was already exerting a damaging influence against him. He had answered Miss Durand's summons reluctantly, supposing that she wished to question him in regard to the Arteveldt tragedy.

"Sit down, Mr. Fordham," said Aura Durand, abruptly, as he paused before her. "What I wish to say must be said quickly; I want no one to know of this conversation, you understand."

He nodded, and took the seat indicated.

"When will your house be ready?"

"Soon. Why?"

"Because I want you to hasten the preparations."

"What; you have yourself retarded them hitherto. The sooner it is open the better for me—now."

"Very well, then. Listen. I want you to take Nina Annin away immediately, *immediately;* do you hear?"

"Why? Has anything more disagreeable than usual happened?" with insolent ease.

"No matter what has happened; I won't have her here; I won't! She will go to day if you use your influence. You know that."

"Oh yes, I know that. I wish to the Lord my influence over her would run out; I'm heartily sick of it, I tell you."

"I suppose so. Being a man, you could not be expected to remain true to a woman long. How soon can you take her away?"

"Soon as the house is ready," with a shrug. "That is, if—"

"If you are well paid. Do you want a thousand dollars this morning?"

"I should think so, rather!"

"Well, I will give you half that sum now, and twice as much when she is out of my sight for good. Mind, you must not let her come here to annoy me."

They talked for a few moments longer, and then, five hundred dollars richer, Mr. Fordham took his leave.

"She's as good as a bonanza," he muttered, as he hurried away. "And how she does hate Nina; she seems to be pretty flush, even for a rich man's daughter. I don't quite understand it; and she never once referred to the Arteveldt affair. She *is* a cool hand."

CHAPTER XXII.

MOTHER GOOSE'S LOG-BOOK.

At last the curtain has fallen upon the scene of Clarence Arteveldt's life drama. At last the grave closes over him, and the sorrowing mother, the horrow-stricken friends and the on-looking spectators, turn their thoughts from the murdered and buried victim to the finding of the murderess. For every one, save Kate Seaton, believes in the guilt of the fugitive Lenore. Even Kate has not dared to confide her belief to any save the detective and her own sister.

Mrs. Arteveldt would have Neil Bathurst near her almost constantly; and because of his influence over her the doctor has told him it was best to humour her, "if he could."

Mr. Hale objected, averring that the search for Lenore Armyn should be promptly begun, and vigorously prosecuted. But the detective had answered in a way that effectually silenced further objection on the part of the worthy lawyer.

"You must allow me to be the judge as to how this work should be done, sir. If the missing woman is to be found it will be as easy tracking her one week hence as now; even easier. I have some work to do in the city yet. This I shall not delay. But remember this, the woman planned her flight so well that not a trace of her destination can be found; a carriage was driven away from the neighbouring corner, but no one knows if it took her. I shall not leave the city until I have a clue to follow."

There was no more to be said; after

that the young detective went about his work in his own way, unquestioned.

A large reward had been offered for the apprehension of the murderess, and one day, just after the funeral, as Neil Bathurst sat beside Mrs. Arteveldt, she astonished him by saying,

"Neil Bathurst, I want you to work now as you never did before, and I will make your reward such as was never offered before. I am now alone in the world; I have no near relatives; there is no one whom I could wish to see in my stead when I am gone. Find me my son's murderess, and the reward I have offered shall be doubled; and, when I am done living, this wealth, mine and my son's, shall become yours."

The detective stood astonished, and finally replied,

"You have many years before you yet, Mrs. Arteveldt, and your wealth can benefit others more than it ever can me. The reward you offer I will accept, but nothing more. Look about you and find an heir or heiress. I have made money by my profession; I expect to make more, and—the chances are that I may die first. The life of a detective is not always a safe one."

"But—you need be a detective no longer if you become my heir. Find that girl fiend, and then abandon the profession."

The detective laughed.

"I could not give up my profession, not even for a fortune," he replied. "Let us drop the subject, Mrs. Arteveldt. I will find your son's destroyer, and then we will come to terms."

Day by day he worked in his quiet, calm way, and three days after that he called at Mr. Hale's office and handed him his first report.

"I must tell you," he said, as the lawyer took it from his hand, "that this is not what, in an agency, would be termed a complete report; that is, one minute as to the smallest details, and giving, not only facts, but ideas and suspicions. I have here reported the little that has been actually accomplished. I have made for my own benefit certain notes, setting forth some queer and very vague suspicions; of these I shall make no mention until they become less shadowy. My work here, for the present, is done; I leave the city to-night."

"Really! Am I permitted to ask where you are going?"

"Certainly," replied Bathurst, with a laugh. "I am going to Fairlie, the former home of the runaway bride. Why I am going you will know when you read my report. Excuse me now, Mr. Hale, my time is limited," and Neil Bathurst bowed himself out of the lawyer's office, to be seen no more in the city until the winter snows lay deep upon the earth and a new year had begun his round.

Two hours later Mrs. Arteveldt and Kate Seaton sat listening, while Mr. Hale read aloud the first report of the detective:

CHICAGO, Nov. 19, 187—.

Report of Neil R. Bathurst, in case of murder of Clarence S. Arteveldt, made to J. G. Hale, as agent for Mrs. Arteveldt.

Being summoned to the house of the dead, within two hours after the murder was discovered, I made a careful search in the room where the deed was done. Nothing had been disturbed, no robbery committed. Two facts seemed plain to me. 1st. That the murder was committed for revenge, not plunder. 2nd. That the deed was done by a cool and skilful hand, and with a foreign instrument similar, but not the same, as the stiletto. I made a careful examination of the house, and could find no indications of any one either entering or leaving it after it was closed for the night. Every door, window, or opening of any sort, was closed and securely fastened—with one exception, of which I shall presently speak.

During the excitement following upon the flight of the bride it would not have been difficult for her, or another, to have entered the house and secreted herself, but to have left in any ordinary manner seems impossible. Naturally, here, these thoughts occur: The murder might have been committed by one of the servants in the house, or one of them might have been bribed to admit the murderer and afterwards secure the house again. These theories, however, have their improbable side, and I may as well remark here that I do not entertain either of them, neither do I believe that the servants are in any way implicated. I have made close inquiries of, and concerning them all, and I believe that they are too honest and too ignorant to plan and carry out such a deed. Nevertheless, I have placed a watch upon their movements, and would advise Mrs. Arteveldt to retain them, for the present, at least; to set her own housekeeper over them, and keep the house open until something occurs to make the measure unnecessary.

I have made every effort to trace the flight of the fugitive from the house; but to no purpose. It is probable that she escaped in the carriage which was seen to leave the vicinity a few moments after her disappearance; but we have no positive evidence of this. If she committed the murder—and the evidence in that direction is certainly strong—it is far more likely that she remained concealed in the neighbourhood until after the deed was done.

I have said that there was a single exception, when stating that the house was securely fastened. The trap, or hatchway, opening out upon the flat roof of the building was not fastened—probably never had been. An expert climber, who had a confederate, might have mounted to the roof by means of hooks and a rope ladder. I say "might," for this is quite improbable; only the most skilled house-breaker would dare attempt this feat, and a woman could not accomplish it. The houses on either side have similar hatchways, but they, so far as I have investigated, were all closed, and bore no traces of having been recently opened. How the murderer or murderess entered or escaped from the house, then, remains a mystery—yet to be solved.

I next set myself to work to obtain testimony of any and every description concerning the escaped woman, who is suspected, with good reason, of being the murderess. There is much evidence, of the circumstantial sort, to indicate her guilt, and much to prove that her revenge was premeditated, long studied, skilfully executed, and—that she had a coadjutor of some sort. I have made diligent search, and am convinced that she did not leave the city then, nor since, by any railroad, steamboat, or sailing vessel. Either she is far less unsophisticated than she is represented, or she is ably supported.

I find that her one friend, who might be able, now or later, to throw some light on the subject, is a Doctor Austin, who lives in Fairlie, the former home of Mrs. Armyn, now dead. This man has charge of the missing woman's property, and she may, sooner or later, apply to him, either directly or through an agent, for funds. It now becomes necessary to see what manner of man this doctor is, and my next move is to visit Fairlie; I shall go to-night, and my next report may be delayed several days.

Thus ended the report, and the lawyer laid it aside with great care, while quick-witted Kate Seaton thought, with blanching cheek, "Good heavens! Neil Bathurst must connect that skilful death-wound, in some way, with Dr. Austin. Poor Lenore! How the plot thickens, and how dark it looks for her."

In order to better understand what Neil Bathurst meant when he informed Mr. Hale that he had made for himself certain notes setting forth some shadowy suspicions that were not yet to be set forth in his reports, let us take a peep into "Mother Goose's Log-Book," as Rob Jocelyn absurdly called his friend's private note-book:

Having talked with Kate Seaton, I felt one-third inclined to believe that Lenore Armyn, as I prefer to call her, *is* an innocent woman. Having since talked with friends, enemies, and different observers, and having perused dozens of letters written by the accused, I am now prepared to assert—to myself—that she is either a pure-minded, fiery-tempered, but high-souled martyr, or else she is the keenest, cleverest, and most dangerous criminal in America. Just at present the odds seem to favour the latter supposition.

Thus read one entry, and on some of the preceding pages occurred the following:

Have talked with the Ruthvens; they had held a high opinion of the escaped, but now feel assured of her guilt. There was a marked change in her manner after the engagement was announced; she was silent and reserved; remained much alone, and seldom went out, except with Mrs. Arteveldt and her son. She never refused to go with them; in fact, seemed to desire to be seen with them in public.

Have talked with the widow Warren; she has been turned out by her very sensible brother, and has taken refuge with Miss VanBuren, her worthy associate. It is remarkable that two females, so thoroughly contemptible, could do so much mischief. Miss Armyn would have risen in *my estimation* if she had killed off the lot. For if she was thus shamefully betrayed, then Clarence, if he died at her hands, did not die a martyr. Nevertheless, justice must be appeased, and I will find this woman if she is atop the earth.

I made the Warren woman and her chum tremble a little, just for my own private satisfaction—told them that they were liable to be arrested at any moment; and so they are, most likely, being what they are. I learned from them that the fugitive seemed averse to meeting me. It seems that I have been mentioned to her, on one or two occasions, and each time, if I am to believe these women, she has manifested an emotion that looked like fear. The Warren woman laughed, in making her statements, and seemed trying, for some reason, to mislead me. The VanBuren said that she had heard the Warren speak of this peculiarity in the manner of the accused; and on the night of the wedding, just before the direful supper, she overheard Arteveldt speak of my absence in regretful tones, mentioning me, against my expressed wish, as "the detective," whereupon the bride turned very pale, and changed the subject, while the eavesdropper—it is likely—ran off to treat her co-conspirator to this morsel of meaning. If I have never seen Lenore Armyn, she is under the same disadvantage—she has never seen me.

In this, as we know, the detective was mistaken; and to this mistake he would, later, be indebted for a signal defeat.

Another memorandum ran thus:

I have had a long talk with that rascal Fordham. I am still at a loss to know whether he is most knave or fool. One thing is certain: He knows something concerning Arteveldt's past that I must get at in some way; if I am not much mistaken, he could put his finger on the writer of those two mysterious unsigned billets. When I asked him if, to his knowledge, Arteveldt had broken off any old love affair to espouse Miss Armyn, he was thrown off his guard for just a second; I could see, by his eyes alone, that he did know of such an affair, and that he meant to keep his knowledge to himself. So he may—if he can.

I can't just make out what interest the veiled woman may or may not have had in this case; her visit was strangely timed, and altogether mysterious.

The case for the accused at present stands about like this: First, her revenge may have been completed when she forsook her husband on her bridal night, and she may have witnesses to prove an *alibi*.

Second. There is a plausibility in the argument that a sane woman would hardly declare herself so publicly if she contemplated such an afterstroke—but then an infuriated woman does not reason—and I have been convinced that, whatever may be her graces and virtues, she has a volcanic temper. I fancy her now knocking down that poor brute of a Dutchman—if the worst is proven against her, why, it's a splendid case for an "insanity" plea. And any ordinary jury will grant a verdict to that effect—in case of a young and beautiful woman.

Third. Could such a woman have struck so cool and unerring a blow, even if she understood the use of that rather unusual weapon?

Fourth. There is the chance of finding a second party who might have had a motive for revenge; and there are the two notes and the secret which, I know, Fordham holds, as clues to work upon. Then there is the half-burned note, written by the murdered man.

On the other hand, every act of the accused, since the day of the scene at Gentleman Jeff's, an account of which I have had from his lips, will tell against her; every act.

Her refusal to dismiss Clarence, at the request of his mother, and the manner of it—her public appearances with Mrs. Arteveldt and her son, in order to make their after confusion more marked—her wedding arrangements—the absence of brides-

maids—and more than all, more than enough, her fiery denunciation and her flight. The story of the knocked-down Dutchman will be dragged to light—even her intellect and self-poise will tell against her—and her evident aversion to the genus detective, as represented by me, will weigh like iron.

I seem to see the scale going down, down, down! and the life of the beautiful fugitive hanging in the balance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN JACOB AUSTIN.

THE rattling old stage coach, or "hack," as the benighted ones called the doleful-looking vehicle that lumbered through the little inland village of Fairlie four times a week, bringing passengers from the nearest railway, five miles distant, drew up before the only hotel the hamlet boasted, and deposited a single passenger, who stood staring vacantly about him for a few seconds, then, clutching his carpet bag tightly, hurried into the shabby little hotel.

"Here's another," exclaimed a languid-looking fat man, who proved to be a combination of porter, clerk and proprietor, all in one. "Business is gettin' lively."

As the new-comer entered, however, he could see nothing to indicate the growing liveliness of which the languid landlord seemed almost inclined to complain. There was nothing particularly "lively" in the landlord, the hotel, or the village.

Fairlie had a "front" and a "back" street, and, evidently, boasted an aristocracy; for the front street was occupied by neat and pretty cottages, and some, a very few, houses pretentious enough to be called dwellings; while the back street—well, that was not much to speak of. There were two or three prim churches, and a neat new school-house. Fairlie was certainly a pretty village; a good place to come to if one wanted to take a nap. The villagers went away in the dismal old stage coach sometimes, and always hurried back as if escaping from untold dangers. Sometimes, too, in the lazy summer, some one came to visit a relative—but what could bring strangers to this sleeping village was a question to arouse wonder, even in the sluggish mind of the fat landlord.

The latest arrival was a plainly-dressed, inoffensive-looking young man, who bore a general resemblance to Neil Bathurst, except that the face looked as stolid as a potato, the eyes had a most sheepish expression, the skin was somewhat browned and freckled, the hands ditto, the moustache was the scraggiest of its kind, and the hair, plastered low upon the forehead and "pomatumed" there, looked as if a rise in lard might soon be expected.

"Just put yer name down there," said the landlord, shoving towards the new-comer a greasy ledger and a time-worn pen.

The young man examined the ledger with much interest, and then pushed up his cuff, took the pen in an awkward manner, and, with as many grimaces and as much apparent effort as a boy would use in making his first pot-hooks, inscribed therein in great sprawling letters, the name, John Jacob Austin. This done, he laid down the pen, with a sigh, and looked about him, as if wondering what he should do next.

"Stranger in these parts, ain't you?" queried the landlord.

"Yes—rather," drawled John Jacob Austin.

"Goin' to stay long?"

"We—ll—middlin'."

"Ain't any related to Doctor Austin, be ye?"

"N—not that I—know of."

"Come on business?"

"Y—es—rather."

"Ain't a runner, air ye?"

"No," replied the stranger, slowly. "I'm lookin' around; maybe I'll buy a bit of land."

At this moment a shrill voice from kitchenward called loudly for "father," and the landlord hurried away, looking somewhat apprehensive.

When he was gone John Jacob Austin opened the book again, and ran his eye over the registered names. Then he gave a low whistle. Just over the leaf was the name, J. B. Brady, and the date of the registry was in August last, while on the new page the entries ran thus:

"J. B. Brady."

"Hiram Sprague, State census taker."

"John Jacob Austin."

"State census taker," mused Mr. Austin, "I should like to see a real live census taker." Then he closed the ledger, went languidly out upon the low, smoke-stained veranda, and looked languidly up and down the street. The afternoon sun was sinking, and things looked as if the inhabitants had already retired for the night. He could stand there and see all there was of the business of the village. Looking up and down, his eye fell upon a time-worn sign, suspended between two windows, over a grocery almost opposite. Without a moment's hesitation he crossed the street, ran up the stairs, and tapped at the door of the room before which swung the sign. The door was opened by a

pleasant-faced elderly man, who greeted the visitor with a stare of surprise, and then politely bade him enter. The visitor drew back, seeming to hesitate for a moment, and then entered the office, holding his hat awkwardly between his two hands, and seemingly much embarrassed.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he began, hesitatingly; "but is this Doctor Austin's office?"

"Yes, sir," replied the pleasant-faced man, "and I am Doctor Austin. Pray sit down."

The young man took a chair and sat fumbling with his hat in a nervous way, while the dialogue continued.

"I hope I don't intrude," he said; "but I have just come in on the *omnibus*, and I looked over and saw your sign and then came right along. *My* name's John Jacob Austin," and he drew from his pocket a blue card, on which that name was engraved in gilt letters, and presented it to the doctor.

"You see, sir," he hurried on, "I am a stranger hereabouts, and your name looked home-like; besides, I want to ask you a question. Did you ever have a brother named Jacob Austin?"

"No," answered Dr. Austin, looking gravely interested; "I never did."

"And you didn't never run away from home to study medicine, and never let anybody hear from you after that?" asked John Jacob, dolefully.

"No," laughed the man of medicine; "I never did."

"Then I am mistaken," said the young man, heaving a deep sigh. "You see, sir, I've lost all my relatives. I never had any brothers and sisters, and my father never had any, only his brother Ezra. My grandfather lived in York State, and was bound to make farmers out of the two. Well, Ezra wanted to be a doctor, and he and grandfather fell out. Pretty soon Ezra ran away, and my father never heard of him any more. Father stayed along on the farm, and when he died it came to me. Pretty soon I sold out, for they were all gone, and I wanted to come west. I had always had a sort of longing to study medicine myself, and father always used to say, 'wait till we find your Uncle Ezra; if he has made a doctor of himself he may take you in hand.' You see, I have been looking around some for a place to settle, and I came here to look at land. When I looked over and saw your sign my heart jumped almost into my mouth. 'What if that should be my uncle?' I thought to myself; 'I would just give up the farming business and go in for being a doctor too.' Then I ran right over. I'm a lonesome sort of a chap you see, doctor," said John Jacob, rising slowly, "and I really do feel disappointed."

The face of the good doctor presented a picture of sympathy.

"I am sorry that I have been the means of disappointing you," he said, kindly. "Don't go, Mr. Austin; perhaps I can be of some service to you, even if you are not my nephew."

So John Jacob resumed his seat and conversed with Doctor Austin, until a cracked bell across the way signalled that supper was ready.

As John Jacob Austin crossed the street, and again entered the little hotel, he looked a shade more cheerful than when he had presented himself at the office of Doctor Austin. He was not thinking of the good doctor, however; his thoughts ran about in this wise:

"That J. B. Brady is unmistakable, and what can he be doing here? If he is here, where is Jocelyn? This goes a little beyond my expectations. Let's see what the supper-table will develop."

The supper-table was in full operation when he entered the dining-room and sat demurely down without even glancing at his fellow boarders. That they were very few he could tell without looking. He ate somewhat awkwardly, and said "thank you" to the girl who served him, whenever the shadow of an opportunity offered itself. After some time he lifted his eyes from his plate and looked sheepishly about him. There were two or three men who looked like mechanics, one with hair as well greased as John Jacob's own, who was evidently a clerk, one pretentious-looking individual who proved to be a farrier, and next him sat *Mr. Jason Bradwardine*. Next him sat a clerical-looking chap, who shot a mirthful glance straight into the stolid eyes of John Jacob, and last—was John Jacob himself.

The farrier and the clerical-looking man kept up a brisk conversation, during which it came out that the latter was none other than Hiram Sprague, the census taker.

After supper the boarders, with the exception of the gentleman registered as J. B. Brady, lounged about and smoked, and talked; and John Jacob, feeling more at ease, brightened up a little. The census taker strolled out, and presently, strolled in again, and soon became the life of the group of loungers. He was not such a solemn man as he looked, after all, and in a few minutes they were all roaring at his jokes, John Jacob with the rest. After

a little, however, John Jacob arose and walked toward the door.

"Take a cigar, young man?" asked the affable census taker, holding one towards him.

"No, thanky; I don't smoke. In—in fact—tobacco smoke makes me a little sick sometimes. I—I believe I'll just walk about a bit."

"It *is* pretty close here, that's a fact. Do you object to smoke out-doors, young fellow? If you don't, why I will take a turn with you."

"Oh, no, I don't mind it outside," replied the young man, as he twirled the door handle.

"Well, then, come along."

So saying, the census taker lighted his cigar, clapped on his hat, and followed, or rather drove, John Jacob out of the room. They walked on without speaking, until they had passed the places of business and were walking along past the quiet cottages, then the census taker drew a little nearer his companion, and asked, in a low voice,

"Neil, my boy, what the mischief are you doing away down here?"

"I didn't shadow *you*, old man. I was struck all of a heap, as they say, when I saw Brady's name on that dirty old register," replied the disguised or rather, disfigured Bathurst.

"So you didn't follow Brad—and me? Then perhaps I had better not ask your business."

"Old man, I got you out of that old hive to tell it to you, and I have got to have your help, even if you have to shake the Bradwardine for a time," replied Neil Bathurst, gravely.

"Good Lord, Neil! is it a heavy case, then?"

"Yes, Rob, it's as bad as your Elise Schwartz business."

"What! is it murder?"

"Yes. It's murder."

"Who is the victim?"

"Clarence Arteveldt."

"What!"

"Clarence Arteveldt. He was murdered on his wedding night."

"Good God!"

They had passed beyond the row of cottages and were now walking by a fenced-in, but vacant lot. As he uttered this last exclamation, Rob Jocelyn, for the census taker was none other, paused and leaned back against the fence.

"Let's stop here," he said, after a moment's silence. "We can talk with more safety than when moving. Do you expect to find the assassin here, Neil?"

"No. I am after threads. Arteveldt's destroyer is believed to be a woman."

"A woman! What woman?"

"His wife."

"Heavens! Tell me all about it, Neil. I can't comprehend the thing."

"Well, Rob," began Neil Bathurst, leaning nearer to his friend, "the morning after the shadowing at Mike's, you remember my telling you that you had spoiled a wedding for me, don't you?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Well, it was Arteveldt's wedding, as I told you then, and it had a tragic termination. You had not been gone ten minutes, when some one rapped at my door. I opened it, and Mrs. Arteveldt's coachman staggered in, looking like a ghost. He was too near crazy with fright to be very lucid, but I managed to make out that there had been murder committed at the new house Arteveldt had fitted up, and I set off at full speed. Arrived there, I went straight to the bridal chamber. The doctor was there already, and old Mrs. Arteveldt in hysterics of the worst sort, while on the bed, all covered up with the satin quilts and finery, lay Clarence, just as if he were sleeping, except that his face was livid, and there was a small, round hole just back of his temple, with only a clot of blood to mark it."

"What?"

Rob Jocelyn turned swiftly, and clutched his friend by the shoulders.

"What, Neil!" he cried, "a stylet wound?"

"Yes."

"Then, by the Lord, Neil Bathurst, you *are* hunting slippery game. Old Schwartz and his sister were killed in just that way, and, I believe, when you find your murderess I shall find mine."

"You think them the same?"

"Yes. Women who use such weapons are not plentiful. Trust me, the hand that struck down old Schwartz in London and the hand that took the life of young Arteveldt in America belong to the same woman, and it will take all your wits, and all of mine, to find her, if she has escaped."

"She has escaped, as mysteriously and effectually as did Elise Schwartz, the London murderess."

"Then I say again, she *is* Elise Schwartz."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NEW LINK IN THE CHAIN.

"I DON'T know," said Neil Bathurst. "You may change your opinion about that, Rob, when you have heard the whole story; and that I can't tell you now. It

would take too much time. But I will tell you this, there is a clear case of circumstantial evidence, and that of the strongest kind, against this girl whom Arteveldt married, the very night he got that death blow. His mother will hunt her to the ends of the earth, and I must find her, and give no thought to anything else until I do. Now then, in a pell mell rush for this girl, or woman, they are leaving some loop holes open; because they can't see them. I can see them, however, and I tell you they need looking after."

"And you want me to stop up the loop holes?" asked Jocelyn, with a laugh.

"I want you to go straight back to the city, and worm yourself into the confidence of that scamp Fordham, who knows some of Arteveldt's secrets, of the off-colour sort. And I want you to keep an eye on the house which stands next to, or rather is a part of, the building where the murder was committed. I'll give you some points; and we must contrive to have a talk to-night, when all these stupid people are safe in bed."

"You want me to go to the city?" said Rob, with a puzzled look. "Where are you going, Neil?"

"I'm going to stay here."

"Here!"

"Yes, here! If I can't get a thread to follow in this village I can't get one anywhere."

"Well! I suppose I must let Mr. Bradwardine drop for a while. However, I fancy that I possess about as much information as he does, at the present moment. He's waiting for something to turn up, for he has got to the length of his tether. What's your lay here, Neil?"

"I'm cultivating Dr. Austin."

"Doctor Austin!"

"Yes. He is the guardian of the supposed murderess. She came to the city a little less than three months ago, fresh from this rural dell. Why, Rob, she arrived the very day that you made your appearance. I was to have met her that evening at Ruthven's; but sent my regrets by poor Arteveldt."

A very peculiar expression was creeping into the face of Rob Jocelyn, but the darkness concealed it from his companion, who went on speaking very low, for they were moving towards the little hotel now.

"Well, as I told you that morning, Arteveldt met his fate that night—his fate indeed! This Lenore Armyn—this country girl—made rapid progress in the city. I fancy Doctor Austin was not a very strict guardian. I wonder if he so much as knows of the marriage and murder."

"Don't know. But I tell you, old boy, your head was level when you came here. I guess I can give you something that you may work out, perhaps. You know 'Brady' and I arrived here—let me see—why, the night after the murder. Something took me with the notion that I had better look after Mr. B.; so I went down the Avenue that morning, and caught him just leaving the house. I followed him to an office, where he inquired about the trains to Fairlie, and bought a ticket; then I went to my quarters, got myself up as an honest census taker, and came on the same train. As I was about to say, a man can't come into this town, or leave it, without being observed more or less, and it was not strange that I should see Dr. Austin riding opposite me in the same coach that brought me and my game to this 'district;' for he did come on that coach, and he came from the city by the same train that brought us."

"He did! Then my reasoning was sound?"

"Your reasoning generally is pretty sound, my boy. Now, I can tell you a little about Dr. Austin. He is the best and kindest of men—that's what all the villagers think, and I fully coincide with them. He is in moderately comfortable circumstances, and has a fat, jolly little wife, who is universally popular. Every one here will swear by Dr. Austin. These facts I have picked up at odd times while circulating about town. Have you seen him?"

"Yes; and I think you have hit him off correctly. Nevertheless, I must find the fugitive bride through him. Have you heard any mention of Miss Armyn in your founds, Rob?"

"Well—yes; I have heard a little about her," replied Rob, with that peculiar intonation which Neil knew meant something suppressed. "But here we are, Neil; let's change the subject; and to-night, if you will be so good as to leave your door unlocked, I will give you a call. I know every corner of this little trap; and everybody except Brady goes to bed before nine o'clock."

"Well, we will follow their example—temporarily," replied Neil, with a laugh.

They ente ed the hotel, resuming their "characters as they did so, and, after a few yawns and nervous inquiries about burglars, John Jacob retired, soon to be followed by the census-taker and all the rest of the household. Jason Bradwardine could be heard pacing restlessly up and down his room till a late hour. But finally the sound of his footsteps ceased, and the little hotel was profoundly quiet.

A little after midnight two forms might have been seen to emerge from a rear door and glide away in the direction of the stables. They seemed to have no designs upon the horses, however, for they went straight towards a wood-pile, and seated themselves thereon as comfortably as they could.

"There!" said the taller of the two; "here we are, safe and comfortable—or tolerably so," giving a hitch, as a not particularly soft log rolled a little under his weight. "Such a supernaturally quiet house is the worst place in the world for private interviews, not to mention the wafer-like quality of the walls. But nobody will look for night-larks on the wood-pile; so begin at the beginning, Neil, and tell me all about this business."

Neil Bathurst did begin at the beginning—at the very moment when Jocelyn had bidden him good morning, and then gone in pursuit of Bradwardine. He described the scene at the bridal banquet, and all that followed, omitting nothing. Then he reviewed the evidence for and against Lenore, told of his various interviews with Kate, Jess Warren, George Fordham, and others; of the finding of the mysterious threatening notes, of the visit of the veiled woman to Lenore Armyn, of his doubts and suspicions, up to the very time when he had set out for Fairlie.

Rob Jocelyn was an attentive listener, and he interrupted the narrator less frequently than was his wont when listening to such a story. Neil Bathurst, who knew him so well, was fully convinced that some idea, the nature of which he could not guess, was working in the brain of the astute Jocelyn, and he waited quietly until Rob should see fit to develop it. When his story was done they sat silent for a long time, Jocelyn seeming to have an unusual amount of thinking on hand. At last he got up, reseated himself in a new position, and then said,

"Well! and so you think that this next-door house needs to be watched?"

"I do. I have gathered this much information concerning it. It was leased a few days after Arteveldt took the other one. Leased by a middle-aged, respectable sort of widow woman, who intends opening an aristocratic boarding-house. Now, as I told you, when I examined the premises, I quickly saw how easy it would be for anyone concealed in that unoccupied house to get out on the roof and enter Arteveldt's through the scuttle-holes or hatch, and then go back the same way, letting themselves out without difficulty. Now, then, if I had mentioned this idea, what would have been the result? They would have insisted upon searching that house, and would fail in accomplishing anything except to put the party on guard. Mind, my theory is, not that the house was entered by some one who merely knew it to be vacant, and who had no interest in it further, when I repeat that the house was taken within the same week that Clarence rented its fellow, and that, in spite of the fact that while his, Arteveldt's, house was already for occupation a week before the wedding, this other house was not yet entirely fitted up, and was and is still unoccupied, you will comprehend my idea."

"Yes!" replied Jocelyn, in that short, quick way usual with him when his brain was busy.

"If I am correct, and the party is not alarmed by a search-warrant, in all probability he will use, or some one will use, the house, for a short time, at least. Do you see my drift?"

"Yes! and I'll take care of the house. Go on, Neil; what more?"

"Fordham; cultivate him; I have already told you all that I can to guide you there."

"All right, my boy! I'll set out by the next stage. And—I'll leave Bradwardine in your charge."

"I don't know about that, Rob; I am afraid I should have to drop him."

"No, you won't. You have a stronger reason for keeping a lookout on him than ever *I* had."

"I! how do you make that?"

"Well—for one thing—didn't you observe by that precious register that he was here in August last? *He* has seen Lenore Armyn and you have not."

"No; and I could not get a picture of her; no one had such a thing. But, Rob, that's not a sound reason after all. I think you can give a better one."

"Yes," replied Rob Jocelyn, "I can, my boy; and here it is: The woman who wrote those mysterious letters to Jason Bradwardine, years ago, was Mrs. Armyn, who died here some nine months ago. The woman who fled from Elm Valley, and who called herself, while there, 'Mistress Bourne,' was Mrs. Armyn. The child he tried to steal was little Lenore Armyn. And the game Jason Bradwardine is in search of now is the same that you are hunting down—Lenore Armyn Arteveldt, the fugitive bride and supposed murderess."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ENGLISH DETECTIVE.

KIND reader, with the rapidity of thought, than which nothing speeds faster, let us

transport ourselves, for a very little time, to another country and another scene.

It is the middle of November. Nay, it is the very day that comes with the sun chariot at its heels, and looks down to behold Clarence Arteveldt a corpse. It is the very hour when over in America that dreary inquest is being held, and Lenore Armyn is being pronounced a murderess.

But now we are in England; we stand upon the threshold of Hillary Hall, the stately country seat of Sir Hillary Massinger, who owns a splendid modern palace in London, and a costly *bijou*, called, fashionably, a shooting-box, in the Highlands, who is lord over many acres, many servants, and many, many thousand pounds per annum.

We enter the private cabinet of Sir Hillary Massinger, where everything is stately, antique, magnificent, and almost priceless. No stranger could enter there without gazing spellbound. But the room might be furnished in deal, so little notice do its inmates take of the beautiful surroundings.

The elder of the two men who sit at a carved table strewn with business-like looking papers, and letters innumerable, is Sir Hillary Massinger,—a proud, stern-looking old man, tall and erect, but wearing upon his brow lines indicative of care and trouble, and, above it, scanty locks of snow-white hair.

The other is a younger man; he may be twenty-five or thirty-five, or even older; you cannot guess his age by his face. It is smooth-shaven, and slightly florid; the eyes are not large, and are of a blue grey colour; they are introspective, inscrutable eyes, and—sometimes—they are keen and restless. The hair is thick and soft; light-brown in colour, and cut close, very close, to the splendidly formed head. It is not a handsome face, but it is a *strong* one; as strong as if cast in iron — and yet—there are times when the face, the eyes, the very figure of the man wears an expression of unutterable weariness and profound melancholy. He is below the medium height; broad shouldered, and thoroughly English in build. And he is an Englishman, and a grand one. Sir Hillary Massinger's *vis-à-vis* and companion is Francis Ferrars, the first and best of English detectives. He sits before Sir Hillary, in the great carved chair, with all the ease and grace of a drawing-room *habitué*. And he looks the old nobleman squarely in the eye, as he says, in a firm resolute tone,

"I have waited upon you to-day, Sir Hillary, because I have some reason for thinking that you are becoming dissatisfied with my work; and I do not choose to be misunderstood, or to have my efforts undervalued, even by you. I must, therefore, trespass upon your time, while I review, for your benefit, my work for the past three years and more."

The old nobleman moves uneasily in his chair, and one aristocratic hand toys nervously with a paper weight, as he replies,

"You are too sensitive, Ferrars. I may have questioned the advisability of one or two things, but I have had, and still have perfect confidence in your skill. Why, man, nobody in England doubts that."

"Nevertheless, Sir Hillary, I must insist upon this hearing. Blunders have been made—shameful ones. But the fault shall rest where it belongs. I will take the consequences of *my* mistakes; others, who deal with me, must carry the burden of theirs. If I am to conduct this case further we must thoroughly review the ground, and begin afresh with a better understanding."

"*If* you are to conduct it!" broke in Sir Hillary. "Why, man, of course you are. I would trust it to no one else; and I will keep it moving until I die."

"Then — so will I," replied Francis Ferrars, all unconscious that he had well-nigh uttered a prophecy.

"Now, then, Sir Hillary," he resumed in that calm, even wonderfully mellow voice of his, and at the same time taking from his pocket a package of papers. "We will begin, if you please, at the beginning."

"Proceed then," said Sir Hillary, sinking back with a half sigh. "If you will, you must, Ferrars; but I protest it is unnecessary."

"I think I shall convince you that it is not unnecessary," replied the detective, tranquilly. And opening the packet he took up the first paper, to which he referred from time to time.

"First, then, Sir Hillary," he began, "long ago, some three years and four months since, you applied to Scotland Yard for my services in a private case, and my chief detailed me for as long a time as your case should require. None of us dreamed then that it would be prolonged year after year, and take me half over the world. When I came to you for instructions this is what you told me. Some fourteen years ago, you said, in a small village in the south of France there had lived a woman, young and beautiful; she was supposed to be married to a young Englishman of good family, and was her-

self of good blood, on the side of the mother, who had been guilty of a *mésalliance*. The marriage with the Englishman had been a private one, and they had lived under an assumed name. They had one child, a girl, then more than a year old; and seemed very happy in their seclusion. But one day the husband disappeared, and the young wife had good reason for believing herself forsaken. There had been one or two stormy scenes between her and some of the husband's relatives, and when the husband forsook her she conceived the idea that sooner or later he would rob her of her child; and she fled from the vine country, leaving no clue to her whereabouts or intentions behind her. The manner in which you set about this case proved that you were a novice in such matters. You gave me names, dates, addresses, and a picture of the woman. You also furnished me with the names and all that you knew of her family—and yet you gave me only half confidence. Is not that true, Sir Hillary Massinger?"

Sir Hillary had been sitting with one hand shading his face, and the other working nervously, clasping and unclasping itself, as it lay on the velvet arm of his chair. He never looked up, as the detective paused for a reply; he only said, in a low, constrained tone,

"Yes—that is true."

"Here then occurred the first mistake, and because of it I spent months of valuable time in useless search. The lady had been missing fourteen years, and I needed everything that you could tell me to guide me in my search—*everything*. In order to successfully follow such missing ones a detective should know their antecedents, who their friends are, who are their enemies, and what their tastes and favourite pursuits are. If he does not know these things his first task is to learn them. You did not choose to tell me these things, so, after eight months' search, I came to you and told you what you already knew; namely, that the missing lady was the wife of your only son; that you had been at first ignorant of the marriage, and that, when it came to your knowledge you took measures which, whether you intended it or not, had the effect of eventually separating the young husband and wife, of wrecking his health and happiness, and of making her an outcast and a wanderer."

"True," said Sir Hillary, with a groan. "I know it!—I know it now!"

"And yet—even then you did not tell me all," resumed the detective, almost sternly. "Month after month passed away; I scoured France, Italy, Germany, Spain; I searched the provinces, and little less than a year ago I came to you and said that I had made one discovery, namely, that some cause that I could not understand lay behind all that you had told me concerning this woman, and that I believed that some one beside yourself had been instrumental in bringing about her trouble. I insisted upon being told of every enemy you or your son might have had, and I insisted upon being told the *true reason* why you desired now, at this late day, to find this woman and her child. I would have nothing less than the whole truth, and finally, but very reluctantly, you told me all, or so I believed and do still."

"Yes," interrupted Sir Hillary, "I told you the truth *then*."

"You told me that your son had died estranged from you, that you being a widower had then married a young wife and hoped for an heir. But your wife died childless, and within the year almost, and then the man who would of necessity inherit after you began to manifest himself. You had always disliked the man, and with good reason, and you had never dreamed of his becoming your heir. There was but one way to prevent it, however; the females of the house of Massinger were lawful inheritors; this man belonging to a very remote branch. If you could find your son's child you would have an heiress, and Jason Bradwardine would be cut off. Anything was better than Jason Bradwardine, and so you set me to look up the missing heiress, without telling me that a man who had the strongest possible interest in keeping this heiress from communicating with you was in existence."

"I tell you, man, I never dreamed of such a thing, and I hated his very name. I never thought of the possibility of his inheriting after me until my wife died. And I know that his elder brother was alive until four or five years ago. I don't believe he ever thought of the succession until I became a widower and childless."

"You think so. Listen, Sir Hillary Massinger. For more than a year I have been like a sleuth hound on the trail of that man. I have been near him when he little dreamed it. I have won the confidence of his servants and his friends. He is base, he is treacherous, he is cunning; he has schemed all these years to become Sir Jason Massinger, of Hillary Hall. He has borrowed money on his expectations, and because you have been blinded I have been following shadows. His elder brother died nearly eighteen years ago, and the letters you have received, purporting to come from him, have been forgeries on the dead, per-

petrated by this schemer. Jason Bradwardine *has* known where to put his hand upon your heiress; whether he knows her whereabouts now is, I think, doubtful. He has been living in a villa in one of the London suburbs, and there is now a woman there who calls herself his wife. I happen to know this to be a pleasant fiction of hers, however. Not long ago I contrived, no matter how, to gain access to his house and his private room; my strategy was not a very safe one, but I took the risk, and forcing open his private desk examined its contents. It was there I found evidence enough to convince me that he had, years ago, known the hiding-place of your son's wife. I may as well tell you how I accomplished my work, perhaps. The villa is very solitary, and few men were in the vicinity at that hour. I approached the house as a tramp, and entered it as a robber. I frightened the woman, and the two female servants, and they submitted while I searched the house and their pockets. From the pocket of the mistress I abstracted this letter; see, it is in Jason Bradwardine's hand, and is mailed from America, from a place called Fairlie, in the State of ——. It is dated August last. I had omitted to say that while I was lying ill, for a little less than a week, Bradwardine had disappeared. I have not seen him since June last; nor could I find a clue to his whereabouts until I came into possession of this letter."

The detective paused for a moment and gathered up his papers, while Sir Hillary sat staring at him and striving to digest this, to him, startling revelation of Bradwardine's cunning.

"I think you will now do me the justice to say that the blunders in working this case have not been of my making, Sir Hillary," said Francis Ferrars, rising as if his business were now completed.

"No, by heavens, Ferrars!" cried the old man, rising in his turn. "It has been my fault, first and last! I have been blind, a dolt, a fool! My accursed pride has stood between me and the only thing that can make happy one remaining hour of my life, my last hour. And now it may be, it probably is, too late to remedy the wrong I have helped to do."

His voice sank to a hopeless cadence, and he threw himself wearily back in the great arm chair once more.

"On the contrary, Sir Hillary; for the first time, I see a ray of hope for us. My course is mapped out; I shall follow it vigorously; and—I believe I shall succeed."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to America by the first steamer."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOCELYN INVESTIGATES.

"THE game Jason Bradwardine is in search of is the same that you are hunting down; Lenore Armyn-Arteveldt, the fugitive bride and supposed murderess."

Rob Jocelyn's low-spoken words brought Neil Bathurst to his feet with a bound.

"Rob! Are you in earnest?" he cried, giving his friend a little shake; "is Bradwardine really in search of Lenore Armyn?"

"He really is, Neil. Good Lord, man, let up that grip on my arm!" said Rob, jerking himself from the tender clasp of Neil's powerful hand. "Bless me, but you are a fraud, old boy; you don't look much to speak of beside me. I almost wish I were not quite so high, and so wide myself, just for the satisfaction of seeing the victims stare out of the eye that wasn't blacked, when I knocked 'em down so nice and easy. Just knock me over once, Neil; I want to see your arm shoot out."

"By thunder! I will, if you don't stop your nonsense, you chaffing old elephant!" replied Neil, with an impatient half laugh. "I want to get down to business. I am thoroughly astounded. The whole thing, from first to last, seems like fatality. So those letters that I picked up, on general principles, as it were, were written by the mother of my fugitive?"

"They certainly were," replied Rob, dropping his jesting tone.

"Tell me what you know about this, Rob."

"Well, you see, I came here at his very heels, and it didn't take me long to find out that he was trying to come the friendly dodge on Doctor Austin. He made a good many inquiries about Mrs. Armyn and her daughter of one and another, in a sort of round-about way, and then I had him safe. He pretended that he wanted to buy the Armyn cottage for a summer residence, etc. Well, when I once got my suspicions aroused it was easy for me, as a census taker, to find old women, and young ones, too, for that matter, who would talk by the yard about anything. I found out that the coming of Mrs. Armyn and child to this village would correspond with the date on which she left Elm Valley; then, too, the descriptions tallied. There's no doubt about the matter, Mrs. Armyn is the woman he was hunting, and, now that she is dead, he tranfers his attentions to the daughter."

"You can't guess his motives?"

"Well, I should say she was in his way somehow. I think his motive is bad."

"No doubt."

"Do you think Bradwardine knows of the murder, Rob!"

"No; I don't. Why, think, man, I didn't know it myself; there are so few of the city papers coming to this out-of-the-way place. All their news seems to come from the State papers. And I don't think Bradwardine reads the papers much; he is one of those confounded bigotted Englshmen who think American literature beneath them."

"Well, I hope he will continue to think so, that is all. Then there is a chance that Doctor Austin is none the wiser."

"Yes, a 'right smart chance,' I should say."

"And Jason Bradwardine is trying to win the confidence of the old doctor?"

"Yes; and no doubt he will do it if you don't put a damper on him."

"I'll put a damper on him. Come, Mr. Censustaker-man, it's almost morning, and we want some sleep."

"But I say, young man, what wire do you intend pulling here? How will you work against Bradwardine?"

"I am John Jacob Austin," laughed Neil, turning towards the house. "I have laid the train already. Before the week is out I shall be studying medicine with Dr. Austin."

"Good! Enough said! Write me out those addresses, and slip them to me in the morning. I'll report to you in a day or two."

"Very good; but we can't send much through the mail; country post-office curiosity is too keen. Don't send oftener than is positively necessary."

They re-entered the house as they had left it, no one save themselves being the wiser because of their consultation.

The next morning the sociable census-taker announced that his labours there were done, and, having bade everybody a jolly good-by, he drove away in the rumbling old stage coach, *en route* for the city.

Let us follow him for a little time. It is evening when he reaches the city, but not late; and, having refreshed himself and changed his costume somewhat, he sallies forth again. First, he saunters about in the vicinity of the house of Clarence Arteveldt. Neil has furnished him with some notes and also with the names of the places where he will be most likely to meet George Fordham; and Rob begins his round with the air of a man who knows exactly what he is about. He surveys the two houses. Through the basement windows of the one he knows to be the Arteveldt house lights can be seen burning brightly, as if to make cheerful as possible the inhabited portion of that now dreary dwelling. From the windows of the other house, however, various lights stream out.

"So, ho!" mutters Rob, under his breath. "No. 49 is in operation. I wonder if they have got their shingle out." He approached the entrance and saw, hanging upon the door, a sign, the bright, new gilt letters glittering in the gas-light, "Mrs. Rogers, private boarding-house." Thus read the gilt lettering; and without a moment's hesitation detective Rob ran up the steps and rang the bell. He had plenty of time to frame a speech before the door opened, and then he was a little surprised to see that it was not a servant who stood surveying him rather critically, not to say unfavourably. He looked like a well-to-do young man about town, as he stood, hat in hand, bowing before the woman who had opened the door. She was a stout, florid-faced, richly-dressed matron of at least forty-five years, and Rob at once jumped to the conclusion that this was Mrs. Rogers herself.

"Good evening, madam," he said, blandly. "Am I addressing the lady of house, Mrs. Rogers?"

"Yes; I am Mrs. Rogers," replied the woman, somewhat coldly.

"I see by this," motioning toward the door, "that you have rooms for desirable boarders, and so I called. I am a stranger in the city, and want a first-class boarding-place in a good locality like this. Do you think you could accommodate me?"

Mrs. Rogers had been standing with one hand on the door as if desirous of closing it and the conversation, and she did not alter her position or her general aspect, as she replied,

"I don't really know, sir; some of my rooms are engaged; all of them were, but there has been a horrible affair next door, and it will hurt my house, I am afraid; some people are so superstitious. I shall know by to-morrow whether I will have any vacant rooms or not; I suppose you can furnish good references?"

He laughed and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I don't know," he replied. "I am lately from the Pacific Slope: I can refer you to plenty of people in California, and I can satisfy you pecuniarily, I'm sure of that; as for the affair next door, whatever it may have been, it won't trouble me."

"I am glad of that, sir," said Mrs. Rogers, with more affability than she had

at first displayed. "If you can make it convenient to call to-morrow afternoon I will give you an answer; I can't show you my rooms to-night. I have just moved in to-day, and they are not ready for visitors."

"Time enough for that to-morrow, madam," said the gentleman from the Pacific Slope. "I will call early in the afternoon;" and lifting his hat he turned and walked leisurely away.

What his opinion concerning the house was one could hardly guess from the single ejaculation that fell from his lips, for he only muttered,

"Humph! Old cat!"

He made no effort to find Fordham that night, but remained in the vicinity of Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house until long past midnight. Bright and early on the following morning he was astir, and set himself about a new piece of work; or rather, an old one that seemed in no way connected with Mrs. Rogers. He went about this work in his proper person, except that, like Neil Bathurst, he substituted a false moustache for the one he had sacrificed, in order the more safely to shadow Jason Bradwardine. His business took him to several of the first jewellers' establishments, and it was the same in each; invariably he was received with courtesy; he held a private interview with the proprietor of each place he visited, to whom he exhibited certain documents and papers containing what looked like a list of some sort; this paper each jeweller took a copy of, and then Rob Jocelyn passed on to the next one. He had visited six jewellers in this manner, and now stood talking in a low tone with the seventh. His six previous visits had been alike, beginning and ending the same. This one, however, was destined to have a different ending.

"You see, sir," Rob said, leaning over the jeweller's desk, "we must move with extreme care in these cases; the jewels may by this time have fallen into innocent hands, and yet, through them we may be able to trace the guilty. As I said before, it is a peculiar case, and I have lately had strong reasons for thinking that the person who stole the valuables is in this city. Here is a list of the gems stolen, as near as we were able to make a list. They were all, as you see, of the rare sort, and they were all of the finest quality."

The jeweller took the list and ran his eye over it, reading it half aloud.

"U—m—m; diamonds—rubies—sapphires — pink pearls — opals." Suddenly he put his head out at the side of his desk and called,

"Smithson, bring me the order book."

The book was brought without delay, and then, without glancing at Rob, the jeweller turned the leaves and ran his eye down the pages with great rapidity.

"Here we are," he said suddenly. "Opals! three large, first-water; that's it, sir? A young lady brought three beautiful opals here more than a week ago, to be made in a set. I wondered a little at her possession of them, but she came with a young lady from one of our first families. So I fancy she is all right enough. The order—well, now, this is lucky—the order was to be ready for to-day. She will call for them, I presume, this afternoon."

"What name?" said Rob Jocelyn, with a gleam of the brown eyes.

"Miss Annin, sir; Miss N. S. Annin."

"Thank you; I will happen in this afternoon, to see Miss Annin." And Rob left, the good jeweller wondering at his coolness, and strode away.

It was almost noon, and Rob sauntered into a neighbouring restaurant and sat down to wait, and order such a dinner as would please him. He had some time to dispose of. The matter of the opals required no thought for the present, so he drew from his pocket an envelope that Neil Bathurst had smuggled into his possession just before he departed from Fairlie, and for a third time perused its contents. It read as follows:—

"DEAR OLD MAN,—I have played the woman so much I'm afraid I am getting to be like the rest. I talk a great deal and never get it all said. I want to add a postscript to our confab of last night. In the first place, enclosed find the numbers, addresses, etc., before I forget that, and in case you forget them. Next, find a letter addressed to Miss Kate Seaton, No. —, —— Ave., Mrs. Arteveldt's house. I want you to deliver it in person, not as a ragman or a census-taker, understand, although these are good in their way, but as Rob. Jocelyn gentleman. Doff the detective. Cultivate Miss Seaton; she is a charming, sensible girl, and, by the way, is fully confident that Lenore Armyn will yet be found innocent. Miss S. will talk freely with you about the affair, and I want you on a friendly footing there; it may help us to know what is going on there sometimes. My letter to Miss S. introduces you as an old and dear friend, lately arrived, and but little acquainted in the city. A word to the wise, you know.—Yours, BATH."

"Humph!" said Rob, as he folded and put away this document. "More of Neil's impudence—and I have got my hand all

out of the way of the thing. And I'm so susceptible, too," heaving a sigh of whimsical discontent. "Well, I will call on Miss Seaton, of course; but first, dinner; next, the opal young lady, and then I must call on Mrs. Rogers."

He was at his post soon after dinner, having first taken the precaution to station a carriage near, bidding the driver be in instant readiness to start. He had waited half an hour, when a well dressed young lady entered the store, and, as had been pre-arranged, the signal was given that told Rob Jocelyn this was the looked-for lady. He immediately moved towards the entrance, and when the lady came out, and crossed the pavement to an open carriage, he passed quickly to his, saying to the driver,

"Follow that carriage, and don't lose sight of it; do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied the man, and in a moment more they were speeding away from the business portion of the city.

On they went, finally turning into the very street where Mrs. Rogers' boarding house was situated. A moment later, the driver bent down and said,

"They are stopping, sir; shall I drive by?"

"Yes; drive slowly."

In another moment they were passing the house before which the carriage was drawn up, and Rob Jocelyn saw, with astonished eyes, that the lady with the opals, and whose name was Miss N. S. Annin, was tripping up the steps of Mrs. Rogers' boarding house.

Half an hour later, in the character of a gentleman from the Pacific Slope, he stood ringing Mrs. Rogers' bell. As on the previous occasion, Mrs. Rogers herself answered his ring.

'I have called as agreed upon, madam," began Rob, with a bow; but Mrs. Rogers interrupted the flow of his eloquence.

"My rooms are all taken," she said, shortly; "you may find some in the next block." And she shut the door with a bang.

"So you won't let me into your house, Mrs. Rogers?" muttered Rob, as he marched away. "Take care, Mrs. Rogers; you must be more business-like."

CHAPTER XXVII.

PICKING A POCKET.

NOVEMBER, December, January, the beginning of a new year. January, February. It is February now, late in the month, too. The winter snows are melting away, and a certain bear, according to those versed in signs and tokens, come out from his lair—very much, one might suppose, as the ring master enters a circus arena with his pronunciamento—and says in his own peculiar "bear" way, "my fellow beings, Spring, beautiful Spring, is about to appear."

It is late in February, and the world has kept moving, but moving so smoothly, for the actors in our drama, that they are ready to declare it has been standing still. All that has been accomplished by Rob Jocelyn, all that has transpired, in fact, may be gathered from the following letter, from Rob to "Mr. John Jacob Austin:"

MY BELOVED JOHN JACOB, — If you and I didn't know what it was to hunt jail birds we might think some valuable time was getting away. But I am as tranquil as an infant. Are you? If, as you say, "Mr. Brady" is still ignorant of the truth concerning Lenore Armyn, and thinks her sure to return to her guardian at Fairlie, if he gives her time enough, I can understand how he can possess his soul in patience. What a rum time you must have keeping him at arm's length from the good doctor, and gathering up bogus information for him. When are you going to send him, through me, another widow O'Neil letter? Well, I have not yet got a chance inside Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house, but, I'll swear to one thing, there's something crooked about it. And I'll locate the "crook" pretty soon. My young lady, of the opals, is still with Mrs. Rogers. I don't lose sight of her, but she keeps very quiet. I have seen her out once or twice with Fordham, and he and I stand pretty well, but for some reason he is more than commonly cautious. I know that he visits the Rogers' house, but he has no notion of taking any one else there—this may be because of the girl.

I have asked of Miss Seaton the particulars you laid out for me. She says that Miss Durand has been out of town for two months, but she has returned this week. Durand! is that the party where the mysterious burglary was committed? It's odd neither the old doctor nor Brad—I beg his pardon, Brady—have blundered upon anything concerning the murder. But I fancy it's so much more in your favour. But keep your eyes open, pard, I believe the circle will close in presently.

Oh! by the way—yes—I do think Miss Seaton is a niceish sort of girl.—Yours, ROB.

This was the letter that John Jacob Austin held in his hand one February day, and perused for the second time, prepara-

tory to consigning it to the flames, for, although it was written in characters more mysterious than Hebrew, to the uninitiated, John Jacob knew better than to keep mysterious-looking documents about him unnecessarily.

"There," he ejaculated, as he dropped the letter in the blazing office fire. "That won't tell tales. Now I wish the doctor would come and get his mail."

John Jacob stood high in favour with Doctor and Mrs. Austin; he boarded in the family and enjoyed their fullest confidence, but, when he first entered the office as student, the good doctor had said,

"There's one thing, John, that I am a trifle notional about, and that is—my letters. I always go after them myself, and never allow any one else to take them from the office, unless sent by me. This is not a matter of suspicion, but of principle. I have known much trouble to ensue from the incautious handling of other people's letters. I never carry letters for others, and never expect them to do so for me."

Of course, John Jacob expressed his perfect approval of the arrangement, and it did suit him, in a one-sided way. He could receive his own letters without exciting suspicion, or question, in the mind of good Doctor Austin.

He had not been long in discovering that neither the doctor, nor Bradwardine, knew of the accusation against Lenore Armyn; for spite of the fact that the doctor had been absent from Fairlie on the very night of the murder, and that he had returned from the city on the very next day, the detective had not long entertained the idea that he had been in any manner accessory to the dark deed.

Dr. Austin might have been summoned to assist Lenore to escape from her husband, or his absence might have been a coincidence; but Neil Bathurst felt that it would have been sheer absurdity to accuse or suspect the doctor of such a crime. He had long ago ceased to wonder that Doctor Austin had never stumbled upon the knowledge of Lenore's blood guiltiness. The good man read the weekly city paper—that is, he read all the scientific articles, all the reviews, and sermons, the quotations, and—must we confess it—the amusement gossip. But he shunned the records of crime, the trials, horrible disasters, suicides, murders; he shunned these and politics, he said, "on principle."

Good Mrs. Austin never looked at a newspaper, believing that they could be better utilized on her pantry shelves.

As for Bradwardine, Rob had hit the mark concerning him. He was too thoroughly an English snob to harbour the idea that an American newspaper could by any means prove entertaining to him.

During the three months that had passed, Jason Bradwardine had written two or three letters to the widow O'Neil. These had been forwarded by Rob, and the answers had been returned through the same medium. Mrs. O'Neil had not been successful in finding the woman who had purloined Mr. Bradwardine's wallet, nevertheless, the gentleman seemed to have a reason for keeping trace of the whereabouts of that clever and agreeable lady.

Mr. Bradwardine passed in the village for a gentleman of means, fond of retirement and of study, though no one could have told what particular branch of the sciences, or art, or literature he most affected. He had assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of Doctor Austin, but no amount of cultivation, no questioning, however shrewdly put, could elicit any information concerning Lenore Armyn; on that subject the doctor was as stubborn as a donkey, and as dumb as death.

As for the detective he had not expected any verbal communications from Doctor Austin, he had relied upon other means of gaining information; but, as yet, he, too, had been unsuccessful.

Of late Bradwardine had made some overtures towards John Jacob, and that astute young man was not slow in putting two and two together—the Englishman was getting tired of country monotony, and, if he could get a hint of the whereabouts of Lenore, would soon terminate matters in some way.

Of course John Jacob had his opinion regarding the doctor's extreme reticence on this one subject. Either he was keeping her hiding-place a secret, at the request of Lenore, she having confided to him in some way a portion of the truth, enough, of course, to arouse his sympathies; or else he had, himself, assisted her to gain that secure hiding-place.

"I'm not at all sure that he would not screen her just the same if he *did* know of the murder," mused John Jacob, as he sat alone by the office fire, studying, as usual, upon this knotty problem; "at the same time I am ready to affirm that he *don't* know it. It's odd that there are no pictures of the girl, even here!"

He arose with a yawn, glanced at his watch, and seeing that it would soon be time for the doctor's return, stirred the fire to a vigorous blaze, and took down a

huge book, which he opened and placed beside him on the table. Having thus prepared himself for the expected arrival he relapsed again into thought. It was not long before he heard footsteps ascending the stairs, and presently Doctor Austin came in like a stiff breeze.

"You are back, sir?" said John Jacob, quite unnecessarily.

"Yes, John, I'm back; got my horse in the stable, and been to the post-office. But I'm pretty tired," pulling off his coat and fur cap. "There's a pretty brisk wind across the open country, and I have driven nineteen miles. It makes a man feel sleepy, this wind."

The doctor drew a chair to the fire and took some letters from his pocket. As he drew them forth one slipped to the floor, and instantly John Jacob picked it up and restored it to its owner. In that one instant, however, he had caught a glimpse of the superscription, and recognized the handwriting, with a thrill of delight.

The doctor read his letters and then returned them to his pocket, after which he conversed very cheerfully with John Jacob. He would talk so long as he had a listener, and just now John Jacob preferred to have him silent.

"If he has no one to talk to he will fall asleep in five minutes," thought he, glancing furtively at the kindly, wind-flushed face. Then rising, he said aloud: "I believe I will go out for a bit; I have been sitting here so long it makes me feel dull."

"That's right, that's right, John. Go out; it will do you good," replied Doctor Austin. And the young man pulled on his great coat and went.

Twenty minutes later he re-entered the office with a step like a cat. Doctor Austin lay upon the lounge, breathing heavily, and evidently sound asleep. This was what John Jacob had hoped for. Noiselessly he crept forward, and bent above the sleeper. Lightly his fingers moved about his breast for an instant, and then he stood erect, holding some letters in his hand. Softly, silently, he moved towards the table. One glance sufficed to select the right letter, and in another moment he was mastering its contents. Into his face crept a look of astonishment as he read, but he finished the perusal quickly, wrote something on a slip of paper, and then crept back, and, as carefully as he had extracted them, restored all the letters to the pocket of the unconscious man. This done, he went softly out again. He walked about for a little while seeming to have some new and agreeable food for thought, and then he turned once more towards the office. This time he entered the room somewhat noisily, and Doctor Austin started, broad awake.

"Mercy on me!" he cried, rubbing his eyes; "I have been asleep. Did I sleep very long, John?"

"Not very long, sir. I just came in; didn't suppose you were asleep, or I would have been more careful."

"Nonsense, John! I should have been awake and at work. I have some letters to write," putting his hand to his pocket.

"Doctor Austin," said John Jacob, sitting down near the lounge, and looking uncommonly grave, "I would like to say a few words to you before you begin to write, if you can spare me the time."

"Certainly — of course, John; speak right out. It's nothing serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no, sir; nothing serious. The fact is, I received a letter to-day from an old New York chum—used to live on the farm next to me, you see. Well, he has come to Chicago for a little trip, and he wants me to meet him there, and sort of go around with him for a week or so. I'd like to see Jim very much, and I'd like to see more of the city; so, if you don't object, why, I think I'll just run down and see Jim and the rest of the sights."

Doctor Austin smiled a little at this climax to John Jacob's speech, but he answered, good-naturedly:

"Of course I don't object, John; do as you like; only be careful of yourself. Chicago's a mighty bad place for young men sometimes. Don't get into bad company, and don't let any of those confidence men get their hands on you."

"I'll try and take care of myself, sir. I've been around a bit since I left the farm, and I guess those chaps won't catch me. And that reminds me of the other thing I had to say." Here he paused, as if in doubt how to proceed.

"Well, John?"

"The—the fact is, sir, I want to speak to you about Mr. Brady."

"About Mr. Brady! why, what of him, John?"

"You see, sir," said John Jacob, as if making a desperate plunge into the subject, "I—I've wanted to speak about him for a long time, but I was afraid you would think me meddling, and I wouldn't like that," with a super-virtuous look. "I don't set myself up for an extra smart fellow, sir, but I guess Mr. Brady has taken me for a bigger fool than I am, because I can't use such high-flown language as he handles. At any rate, he has taken of late to quizzing me about your private

affairs, and he kept it up until he aroused my suspicions."

"What! What does he question you about, John?"

"Why, sir, about some young lady that used to live with you, I guess—Lenore, something, I don't recall the other name. He wants to find out something about her. To tell the truth, when I got suspicious I just let him go on a bit, and finally he came out plump and said if I could tell him or find for him the present address of this lady he would make me a present of a hundred dollars."

"Bless my heart," cried the doctor, bounding up. "Bless my heart, John. Why didn't you tell me before? I see it now; he used to quiz me a little, too. But—" sitting down again, suddenly, "I don't know anything about the young lady. I *don't*, positively."

"Of course you don't," said John Jacob, indignantly. "I tell you what, sir, it's my opinion that Mr. Brady is a spy or detective or some sort of a confidence man; and I just thought I ought to tell you so, before I went to the city."

"I'm glad you did, John. I'm very glad you did," said the doctor, still very red in the face. "When do you want to start, my boy?"

"To-morrow," said the bogus student, not without sundry twinges of conscience. "I would like to get there at the same time Jim does."

"Well, well; go and have a good time. I'll give Mr. Brady a cool reception if he comes about here any more. Come, John, let's go to supper."

"I reckon I've spoked Brady's wheel," thought John Jacob as he drew on his overcoat; "but who would have thought of hiding Lenore Armyn in a mad house?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ESCAPED FROM A MAD-HOUSE.

On the very outskirts of Chicago, in a certain street which must be nameless, stands a large house. It is old, but very pleasant of aspect, standing in its own grounds, which are large, well kept, and beautiful.

It is a rambling, irregular building, quite unlike anything else in the vicinity, and the occupants thereof are as rambling, irregular, and unlike their neighbours as is the house itself. For this is Doctor Burton's private mad-house.

If ever you are insane, dear reader, go to Doctor Burton's. If your aspiration is to cut somebody's throat, or if you are liable to sudden fancies of that sort, at stated times, he will clap you into the straightest of strait-jackets, and keep you there until there comes an improvement in your morals.

If your tendency to destructiveness does not extend beyond a hunger and thirst for smashing furniture, and tearing the "products of nature" up by the roots, he will furnish you with an "escort," and let you wander about the house and grounds at your own sweet will. While if your malady is of the mild and harmless sort you will hardly know that you are under surveillance. You may explore the premises unquestioned and unhindered; and if there is nothing eccentric in your manner or appearance you may even wander out upon the highway for recreation. In short, Doctor Burton will let you do anything that you can do decently and in order, even if you are 'mad as a March hare.'

In a large, pleasant, second-floor room, at Doctor Burton's, on this day of which I write, is a young and fragile looking girl. The windows of this room overlook the grounds, the front entrance, and the street beyond. There are no bars across them to make them hideous, unsightly things; neither is there anything in the room to indicate that this is the abiding place of a lunatic. The windows are prettily draped with whitest lace, and everything about the room is pretty, feminine and indicative of refinement.

The girl, who is pacing slowly up and down the room, is very lovely, spite of her plain black dress, her pale face, and the look of unutterable woe and weariness in the great yellow-brown eyes. Suddenly she flings herself down in the easy chair by one of the windows, and heaves a deep sigh.

"Oh!" she murmurs half aloud, and clenching her small hands tightly, "what a life to live! and what a future to contemplate! A vague, mysterious shadow from the first has hung over my entire life, and now—this, this curse has come upon me, and I—I must submit; there is no help for it. But oh! were it not for this other, older dread, would I not fight to the death, but I must do nothing to court publicity. I dare not."

She turned her eyes wearily towards the window.

"Oh, the world is so large, and it looks so bright," she cried; "and here am I, caged almost, feigning a lunacy that will soon become reality, perhaps."

Caged she had said; well, not to be able to go where one wills is to be caged,

of course, and in this sense she was caged. Otherwise, she was Doctor Burton's most privileged patient. She seldom chose to walk outside the grounds, but when she did desire a larger range she was free to go out, and to go unattended.

All at once she started up with a half suppressed cry upon her lips; a man had entered the grounds, and was walking rapidly towards the house—she looked again closely, eagerly, and then drew suddenly away from the window.

"It is; it is that man," she breathed. "If he should have seen me; but no, that is impossible."

She turned swiftly, shot the bolt of her door, and then sat down, as if to think.

Meantime the approaching visitor ascended the steps and rang the bell. It was our friend Neil Bathurst, *alias* John Jacob Austin.

But this John Jacob was a degree brighter than the John Jacob who had left Fairlie two days before. His clothes were of better material and better fit, his hair was less sleek and oily and more agreeable to the civilized sight and smell. His face had lost its stolidity, and the sheepish look was gone from the eyes. Even his name had been retouched, for the neat, white card, which he requested the servant, who admitted him, to present forthwith to Doctor Burton, bore, in a fine, firm hand, the name of John J. Austin.

The front rooms on either side of the hall, being the largest as well as among the pleasantest rooms of the house, were fitted up as parlours for the use of the patients; and the private office and sanctum was in a wing midway between the front and rear entrances, and overlooking but a small portion of the grounds. It was here that Doctor Burton received his visitor.

The doctor was a funny, pleasant little man, who possessed more humanity than actual professional skill. He was beloved by the most of his patients, and his servants voted him the best of masters.

"Be seated Mr. Austin," said the good man, as his visitor entered his presence, "and tell me in what way I can serve you."

The doctor was an energetic man, counting his time as valuable, and he was famous for coming straight to the point. The young man took the seat indicated, and promptly began his business.

"I have just come up from Fairlie, and have called upon you at the request of Doctor Austin,"

"Oh! You come from my friend the Doctor? Is he well, Mr.—why bless me, your name is Austin, too. Are you a relative?"

"A very distant one, sir. I am studying with him, and called to inquire in his behalf, after the young lady he left in your charge not long ago."

"About Miss Lee. Yes, yes! Miss Lee is doing splendidly, splendidly. Her malady was a peculiar one."

"I never saw Miss Lee," said Mr. Austin, frankly; "indeed, I hardly remember if my friend mentioned the nature of her peculiar aberration, as he termed it, except as an aberration. He desired me to call and to see her, if you considered it best."

"Oh, Miss Lee is well, comparatively speaking; why she is as sane as you or I, except that at times she becomes possessed of the idea that she is about to be murdered. She has not had this notion for some time now, and seems as sane as anybody. Shall I send for her?"

"If you please; I had hardly time to receive full instructions, I came on a matter of business, and at a moment's notice, in response to a telegram, in fact, having barely time to catch the stage. The doctor's messages were, necessarily, very hurried. He wished me to assure myself concerning her welfare, and ask when you would think it advisable to remove her."

"I don't think it would answer to take her to any public place," said the doctor, gravely. "But if she were taken where she would have quiet pleasant surroundings, and see few strange faces, the change might be made at any time."

"Indeed! Then, under your treatment the malady has become a mere idiosyncracy, I infer?"

"Merely that, Mr. Austin; merely that," replied Dr. Burton, touching a little hand-bell.

"Step up to Miss Lee's room, Jane, and ask her to come down for a moment," he said, as an elderly woman answered his summons. Then, as she went to do his bidding, "after you have seen Miss Lee I shall be happy to show you some of my other patients, Mr. Austin."

Mr. Austin signified his delight at this arrangement, and they continued to chat pleasantly while waiting for the arrival of Miss Lee. Meantime Jane proceeded upstairs and rapped at the door of the pretty front room. There was no sound from within, and she rapped again, at the same time saying,

"Miss Lee, are you there? It's I, Jane."

Then she heard a movement from the other side, and a soft voice asked,

"What is it, Jane?"

"A message from the doctor, miss; please open the door."

In a moment the door opened a little way, and the lovely young lady looked out.

"Dr. Burton says will you please come down to his office, Miss Lee. Why, what's the matter, ain't you well?"

"I'm a little tired, Jane, that's all. Who is with Dr. Burton?"

"A nice-looking young man, miss; some of your friends, I reckon."

"I suppose so," with an odd laugh. "Did you say they were in the private office?"

"Yes, miss."

"And—who is down in the hall?"

"Nobody at all," replied Jane, wondering a little at the question.

"Jane," said the young lady, "I have been writing, my hands are all inked; won't you just run down the back stairs, quick, and bring me a pitcher of warm water?"

"Yes, miss. Shall I come back by the front and tell the doctor you will come?"

"Yes; no; bring the water up the back way, Jane. I will leave my door open; you can put the pitcher down outside, and then run down the front stairs; now hurry, Jane."

Jane turned and moved quickly towards the rear stairway. Scarcely had she disappeared when the young lady snatched up a hat and shawl that lay in readiness, and leaving her door ajar, ran lightly down the front stairs, opened the door softly, and, in another instant, was speeding down the path leading to a small side gate; through this she hurried, and then, casting one swift glance behind her, turned her face cityward. Meanwhile, Jane fulfilled her bidding to the very letter; she came puffing up from the kitchen and deposited the pitcher on the floor as directed.

"Here's the warm water, Miss Lee," said she, as she put it down, and then, without glancing within the room or stopping for an answer, she went down by the front way and announced that Miss Lee would be down "soon." This accomplished, she marched off kitchenward, feeling that she had done her duty.

Doctor Burton and John Jacob waited nearly half-an-hour, and then the former began to feel surprised, and the latter uneasy.

"Really, it's unusual for Miss Lee to be so slow, or so careless," said the doctor, finally. "I'll just send her up another message." And he touched the bell once more.

"I think it is as well," said the visitor. "The fact is, I am a little pressed for time."

In a moment Jane presented herself.

"Jane, go up and see what detains Miss Lee, and be quick about it," said Doctor Burton."

Jane was quick about it. She went and came back in less than half the time she usually employed in going up and down a flight of stairs.

"She ain't there, sir," she said, bursting into the office like a comet; "she sent me for a pitcher of warm water, and told me to set it outside the door; I did so, and the pitcher is just where I left it, and her door open just the same."

"Bless me," cried the doctor; "she must have had one of her attacks again!"

"Yes; I presume she has," replied the visitor, dryly. "Jane, did you tell her that any one was with the doctor?"

"Yes, sir," replied the wondering Jane; "she asked me who was here, and I told her a young man was."

"You did? Well, I'm sorry for that. Doctor Burton, I must ask to see the room just deserted by this young lady at once. If you have any idea where she may have concealed herself please search for her immediately."

Doctor Burton looked more than astonished; he looked indignant.

"What, sir; what!" he cried, "you really presume too much. I do not run down my patients in this manner."

"I tell you, sir, you must search for this one with all the force you can command," cried this strange doctor's student. "Jane, conduct me to her room, instantly."

"Jane, stop," cried the little doctor. "Young man, you have no authority for this; if my patient does not choose to see you she shall not; I believe you are an impostor."

The visitor laid a firm hand on the shoulder of the little man, and said in a stern tone, "I am a detective, doing my duty; stand aside, Doctor Burton, and let me pass."

Then he set the doctor aside as if he had been a wooden man, and rushed out and up the stairs.

As soon as he could recover his breath. Doctor Burton scampered after him, and Jane followed at his heels.

"Sir," panted the little doctor, entering the room, which Jane's mention of the open door and the pitcher had enabled the detective to identify as the room of Miss Lee, "explain yourself; did Doctor Austin send you here? dare you say that he would bring a criminal to my house? Bless my soul!"

puffed the little man, "if I don't think *you* are a madman."

"Dr. Austin did not send me here, sir; neither is the good man aware of the charge which stands against this girl. Jane, come here; is there anything missing from this room?" he asked quickly.

Jane glanced about her.

"I saw her hat and shawl lying on that chair, sir, when she opened the door and sent me for the water; I expect she wore them."

"Wore them! Doctor, quick, how much liberty does this girl, this patient, have?"

"Liberty! bless my soul! she has perfect liberty; she goes in and out as she pleases."

"What! out of the grounds?"

"Yes, anywhere."

Uttering a remark not at all complimentary to the doctor and his system, the detective, without the ceremony of an adieu, rushed down the stairs and burst in among the few mild maniacs sitting in one of the parlours.

"Ladies, I beg your pardon," he said, suddenly recovering his politeness, "did you see a young woman go out from the grounds a little while ago?"

"Do you mean the proud woman with the yellow eyes?" asked a young girl, who was religion crazed. "She went down that path fast, very fast, and then she went out at the gate and flew up, up, up; she is in Heaven by this time."

"She didn't fly up," said an elderly woman, testily; "she ran, ran, ran; I saw her."

On one point the two lunatics had not differed, and the detective, resolving to accept their testimony, dashed open the street door and hurried on to the side entrance.

"Bless my soul!" cried the doctor, looking after him. "I must write to Doctor Austin right away. Bless—my—soul."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BALL TOSSER'S DAUGHTER.

FOR two or three blocks the flying girl kept on in a straight course, and then she paused and looked irresolute. She could not keep straight on like this; she could not know how soon a pursuer would be on her track. At this moment the tinkle of a bell, sounding two blocks distant, struck her ear—the street cars; if she took the first one it would be far down towards the busy part of the city before the next would overtake it; and her pursuer had not brought a carriage.

She turned down the side street and ran swiftly; it is safe enough to run when one runs towards a street car, and her speed brought her to the track just as a down car was passing; she hailed it, and soon, panting and breathless, was jogging along "down town."

They were a long way out as yet, and, it being too late for many people to be going down town, and too early for them to be coming home, there were only one or two passengers in the car. Nevertheless, the fleeing one drew her veil carefully over her face, and tried to look as indifferent as possible.

Where was she going? She hardly knew; if she but dared to go straight to some railroad depôt; but she knew that by so doing she would incur heavy risk; besides, she did not know where to go if she left the city. Sitting there, she thought of her first ride in a street car, and of Kate Seaton's laughing plea, "You won't disappear, soon, will you, Nora?" And she had replied that she would "not ride away on a broomstick." She would break even that promise now if she could. Oh, to be able to disappear; to vanish utterly!

On the seat, not far from her, lay a crumpled newspaper, one that had been abandoned, probably, by some passenger who had no use for a paper ten hours old. She put out her hand and drew it towards her; if it would only tell her where to go!

Probably the last reader had been perusing the advertising page, for it was turned outwards, and the eyes of the girl fell upon a column of wants, wanted, wanted, wanted. It was the miscellaneous column, and presently she paused, and considered this advertisement:

WANTED IMMEDIATELY—TWENTY young ladies for the ballet. Also, private lessons given in all branches of the theatrical profession.—Apply to Mrs. A. HARRIS, 401, S——— Street.

"I wonder where it is," mused the girl. "I could go there and rely upon chance for my next inspiration. It is the last place one would think of searching for me."

A moment later the conductor entered from the rear platform, and she leaned towards him and asked in a low voice,

"Where is S—— street?"

"S—— street? About seven blocks away. We cross it."

"I will get off there, please."

"How fortunate," she thought; "I can't have far to walk, either." She left the car at the street designated, and after looking up and down for a moment, to ascertain how the numbers ran, she turned

and walked briskly southward; three, four, five blocks, and then she paused before No. 401. Mercy, what a shabby little house it was, standing back from its loftier neighbours; and what a very muddy entrance; it looked as if people had been tramping to and from it through an ocean of mud for ages and ages.

Miss Lee, or Lenore Armyn, as we may as well call her, became conscious at this stage in her observations that a feminine face was looking out at her through the not particularly clean window; and with a mental resolve that let come what would no one should see her play the coward, she drew her shawl closer about her, and resolutely approached the door. More than once since her voluntary imprisonment at Doctor Burton's had she fancied herself in a position similar to this her present one, and she was not altogether unprepared for the emergency. She had had no forewarning of the ballet mistress, of course; but she had thought it possible that she might be traced, even to a madhouse; and she had fancied herself as she was now, wandering alone and asking for some secure hiding place. She had even prepared her "little story," and now, with a few impromptu alterations she must tell that story to the mistress of this, the shabbiest abode she had ever entered.

"Does Mrs A. Harris live here?" she asked of the woman who had been looking from the window, and who now beamed on her from the half-open doorway; not quite half-open, either, for the woman's form filled up the opening, and it was a very meagre form indeed.

"I am Mrs. Harris,' replied the woman, opening the door an inch or two wider, and scanning her visitor closely. "Do you want to see me?" This last, after having assured herself that the young lady's plain garments were of rich material, and that she was not one of the "profession."

"Yes, madam," and now the woman observed that the veiled strangerspoke with a slight foreign accent, "if I may talk with you alone."

"I am alone," said Mrs. Harris, stepping away from the opening; "come in, please."

Lenore was only too glad to get out of the street, and she glided in quickly.

"I understand that you want some pupils for the stage, madam?" she said, without lifting her veil.

"I take a few pupils," replied the ballet mistress, loftily, and at the same time removing some show bills and papers from the only really safe-looking chair in the room; "take a seat, miss."

Lenore seated herself and took a rapid survey of her surroundings. There was, first, a very dirty and much worn carpet; and a table, that creaked when you touched it, covered with an ink-stained scarlet cloth and littered with old play-bills, older looking letters, two or three play-books, a quantity of photographs of the "profession," one or two shabbily bound volumes, and a pile of printed business cards that looked as if fresh from the press; pens and ink and a big ledger completed the contents of this table. Above it hung a few cheaply framed pictures of scantily-clad actresses, and one larger than the rest, and better framed, of Mrs. Harris herself arrayed as the goddess of Liberty.

A rusty stove that looked like an elongated barrel, and gave out a little more heat than does a refrigerator, stood nearly in the centre of the room. A piano, the smallest and oldest, and most hopelessly tuneless of its kind, stood opposite the table, and six cane chairs, all more or less disabled, were ranged along the walls. And this was the drawing-room, receiving-room, and private office of "Mrs. Harris, Ballet Mistress."

Mrs. Harris herself was a little ferret-eyed woman, with sandy hair, sallow complexion, sharp features, and figure to match; and was apparently on the border land of her fortieth year.

An observer of ordinary intelligence could hardly fail to interpret aright some of the characteristics of Mrs. Harris. Her surroundings gave evidence that she was not overburdened with riches, while Lenore, who was something more than an ordinary observer, quickly decided that she was keen, cunning, and avaricious. A woman whose affections and sympathies would be quickly drawn towards a full purse. Having taken a hasty inventory of the lady and her surroundings, Lenore began where she had left off.

"I called in response to an advertisement," madam," she said, as if duly impressed with the majesty of Mrs. Harris. "Have you—room for any more pupils?"

Mrs. Harris looked dubious.

"I have a pretty large class on hand," she said, as if her large class were at present securely packed in sawdust, and carefully put away. "What branch do you want to study?"

"Really! I hardly know," replied Lenore, flinging back her veil, as if she had just thought of it. "I am quite ignorant regarding these matters. What do you teach, Mrs. Harris?"

"Everything!" with a comprehensive flourish of ten bony fingers. "Acting,

singing, burlesque, song and dance, clog, jig, club swinging, ballet dancing, trapeze."

While Mrs. Harris was running through with this list of "branches" she had been mentally cataloguing Lenore after this fashion,

"Handsome, educated, no fool, little feet and hands, nice form, lovely voice, dressed awfully dowdy, but rich; may have a little money, but green—one could make a fortune off her if one could catch her."

All unconscious of this mental review and ultimatum on the part of Mrs. Harris, Lenore sat struggling to recall the list of accomplishments as given by her, and wondering vaguely if she taught them all herself; this question shaped itself into words.

"Do you teach all these—branches yourself?" she asked.

"Oh, no. I can teach everything but trapeze and club swinging; I have several teachers; but some of my pupils do not care to have a gentleman teacher, and so I take them myself."

"I should not like a gentleman to teach me," said Lenore.

"No, I suppose not." With a nod of approval. "What do you think you would like to study?"

"I—I think I would prefer acting."

"Oh! dramatic lessons?"

"Yes."

"Let me see. How is your elocution?"

"I am a graduate, madam, and am considered a fair elocutionist."

"Oh," suddenly losing her animation on this subject. "Well, you can do as you like. May I ask your motive for taking lessons; do you want to go on the stage?"

"Why—oh, yes, of course, Mrs. Harris. The stage is my ambition," adding *sotto voce*, "for the present."

"Well, then, I'll tell you frankly that dramatic acting is poorly patronized and worse paid. You can make double the money in some other branches that you can in the dramatic business."

"Indeed—then perhaps you can advise me what to study."

"Can you sing?"

"Yes—that is—a very little."

"Do you play the piano?"

"Not—much."

Mrs. Harris, being a close observer, here made this mental note,

"I believe she lies"—then aloud, "You have a fine stage presence, and a nice form; I think you would make a decided success as a song and dance lady."

"I—I'm afraid I don't quite understand," hesitated Lenore.

"Why! it's a branch of the variety business, you see, and variety is the only business that pays in these times. In fact it is the rage. I presume you could sing enough for that, and the steps are very easy. You would look splendid in a song and dance suit."

"What kind of a suit is that?"

"Why—knee-breeches, you know, and a cut-away coat——"

"Do you mean dressed like a boy?"

"Well—yes, similar; only you wear satin, &c."

In spite of the shadows of her past, and the uncertainty of her future, Lenore almost laughed; she had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and as is the case with all frank, fearless natures, a decided taste for adventures of the odd and absurd sort. But she saw that Mrs. Harris had quite set her heart on the song and dance business, and she was desirous above all things to propitiate Mrs. Harris. So she said, after a moment's reflection,

"I will leave it with you, Mrs. Harris. Your judgment is better than mine. If you really think that I will do nicely in that line I will try and learn. But I may prove stupid."

"If I didn't think so I should not say so," replied Mrs. Harris, with her lofty air, at the same time drawing her chair to the table, opening the big ledger with much alacrity, and taking up the pen. "Do you wish to give me your name today, and begin immediately?"

"Yes," looking curiously at the big book. "My name is Lena Voss."

Mrs. Harris bit the end of her pen, and sat as if waiting; finally she said,

"Then, ahem—I suppose you will wish to make a payment?"

Lenore at once saw her cue. Of course this ballet mistress must have money. She promptly drew out a well-filled purse, and did not fail to mark the hungry look in the eyes of Mrs. Harris as it appeared.

"This woman wants money—needs it too, I should think," thought Lenore. "So much the better for me." Then she said,

"I had neglected to ask your terms, Mrs. Harris. What am I to pay you?"

"I shall charge you twenty-five dollars for a course of twelve lessons," said Mrs. Harris, rising unblushingly from her usual price of fifteen dollars. "And I find it necessary to require at least ten dollars in advance."

Lenore promptly opened her purse and took out a roll of bills, from which she

drew a crisp ten-dollar note and passed it to Mrs. Harris.

"Now, Mrs. Harris, I may be intruding upon your time if I talk too long, and I want to consult you, or ask your advice, when we have settled about the lessons," she said.

Mrs. Harris wrote out a receipt for the ten dollars with a flourish, and handed it to Lenore before she replied.

"There is nothing to settle except when you will take your first lesson. You must get the steps the first thing. So I am ready to hear whatever you wish to say."

"The truth is, Mrs. Harris," began Lenore insinuatingly, "I am in want of a friend and advice very much just now. I am alone and an entire stranger in the city, and I want a quiet boarding place. I shall be glad to pay you for any extra trouble I may cause in asking advice or aid from you. I am not without income, but I am in a little trouble at present."

Mrs. Harris began to look interested. It was not unusual, by any means, for Mrs. Harris to come in contact with young ladies who were in a little trouble. In fact, among the young ladies who applied to Mrs. Harris for "situations" on the stage, those who were in "a little trouble" were the rule, not the exception. But young ladies who were in trouble, and yet carried a full purse, were exceptional characters, and to be treated as such; therefore Mrs. Harris bestowed upon Lenore a look of beaming interest and her undivided attention.

"I shall have to tell you a very little about myself," went on Lenore, who had not once forgotten her foreign accent. "I am, as you perceive, a foreigner. I am also an orphan; I have a small fortune in my own right, and it is so arranged that no one can prevent my drawing the interest of it, so long as I retain my liberty. But my guardians, who are also foreigners, decided German in fact, have fairly lived upon my income, and have supported, and partially educated, their own son and daughter at my expense, and I have submitted, because I knew no one who could help me—had no acquaintances, in fact. They move frequently, and give me no chance to make friends; and about a month ago they came to this city. Well, last night I overheard them planning to try and make me promise to marry their son, and I found that, to put me more in their power, they had given their neighbours the impression that I was partially deranged; saying that they had only to watch me in order to be convinced of my insanity. Well, to-day I had to draw my money, and my guardian's wife came with me to get it. I had made up my mind to leave them for good, for I knew that they would shut me up if they could not make me marry their Hans in any other way, and I was very unhappy there. I had seen your advertisement, and made up my mind to come to you, and if I could become an actress I would go away somewhere where they would never find me. We went into a store, and while the woman was looking at some silk I stepped out and found my way here. These people will look everywhere for me, but if I can find a safe place to stay in I can pursue my studies for the stage unmolested; and the banker who pays my income to me will never reveal my hiding place; indeed, he need not know it."

Lenore had hurried on, determined to get her story told at once, and, by the time it was told, she began to believe herself quite an actress already. It was not a very original story, to be sure, but it was original for Lenore. Meanwhile, the ballet mistress sat listening intently, and her imagination began to lay its greedy hands upon many more ten-dollar bills from the purse of the young lady in want of a friend. She was inwardly regretting that her house was not more commodious, but back of this "place of business" there was only a small kitchen, and a smaller sleeping room; and compared with the furniture, not to mention the cleanliness, of these more private rooms, this front parlour was a palace. But let us not be unjust, poverty is a hard-master, and Mrs. Harris had learned her worldliness while struggling, hand to hand, with fate, for her daily bread. The time had been when Mrs. Harris had been young and pretty; when she had pirouetted behind the foot-lights, in the pinkest of tights and the airiest of gossamer, and when life had for her some downy places; the down may have been of a somewhat questionable quality, but of that we need not speak. Mrs. Harris had known some generous impulses in her palmy days, and, if she could have afforded it, would have been generous now; as she could not afford to be genuinely generous she began to evoke from her "inner consciousness" a feeling made up of two parts avarice and one part admiration; and this combination she termed affection, and promptly proffered to Lenore. She pondered a moment, and her ready wit soon put her in possession of a bright idea.

"Let me see," she said, as if she had not already made up her mind. "Your story has interested me wonderfully, and you may rely on me to do all for you that lies in my power. My place is very small,

or I would offer you a home with me. You don't want to go out much, I suppose?"

"Oh, not at all, madam!"

"And you will want to be pretty near me, then?"

"Yes, if possible."

"Then, I think I have the idea. There is a lady living on the next street who has one or two very pleasant rooms; I have been of some service to her, and she will be glad to do me a favour. I can get you in there, I think. But we must use caution, we must not tell her your story."

"Then I must trust you to invent one," said Lenore.

"Well, I would suggest something like this," said Mrs. Harris, becoming very confidential and business-like in her tone and manner. "I will tell Mrs. Horne that your father is a German ball tosser."

"What's that?" interrupted Lenore.

"A performer who juggles cannon-balls with his feet, you ignorant child," laughed the now elated Mrs. Harris.

"Oh! well, my father is a cannon-ball tosser, is he? Go on, Mrs. Harris."

"I will tell her that he is travelling with a circus——"

"A circus?"

"Of course! Ball tossers always go with circuses."

"Oh, do they? Well, I won't interrupt you again, Mrs. Harris."

"I will say that he is away with a circus, and that you have been in a convent school; that now your education is finished, and he intends fitting you for the stage; as he is constantly travelling, he has put you in my charge; don't you see?"

"Oh, yes; that's excellent!"

"Well, if you are known to have money some suspicion may be excited, so, as your guardian, you had better put some money in my hands, from time to time, and let me attend to all expenses; this will be safer for you all around."

"And will please me better, too," said Lenore, as if she did not see through this proposition. "You make all the necessary arrangements, Mrs. Harris; I will let you attend to all the business gladly."

CHAPTER XXX.

PETERKIN'S WARNING.

DOCTOR and Mrs. Austin were early risers; not content with rising with the sun, they sometimes got up a long time before it. The doctor arose just a little later than usual, however, on the morning of the fourth day after the departure of John Jacob, for he had been beside a patient until very late, and had driven home after eleven o'clock at night. Mrs. Austin had arisen at her usual hour; she never varied much, and the breakfast was well under way when the doctor entered the kitchen.

"Why did you not sleep longer, Thomas?" asked his wife, looking up from her beefsteak.

"You know I can't sleep when any one is up in the house, mother," replied the doctor, with his cheery smile. "Besides, I am getting rather hungry, to tell the truth. I wonder if the Smiths are up yet."

"Yes, their chimney is smoking. Why, Thomas?"

"Why, my trip yesterday took me off before mail time, and I was thinking we ought to have a letter from John; he said he would write. I believe I will run over to Smith's while you are cooking the steak."

"Well, you have time if you hurry. I would like to hear from John," said good Mrs. Austin. And the doctor threw on his hat and hurried to the post-office. Smith's post-office and dwelling were under one roof, and so, although it was early, Smith was found at his post. There were two letters for Doctor Austin, and he came briskly back, wondering a little as to their contents.

The first that he opened was from Doctor Burton, and it struck consternation to the heart of its recipient. It contained these few lines:

"DR. THOMAS AUSTIN—*Dear Sir and Friend:* Come to town immediately. Miss Lee has fled from my house. This afternoon a young man calling himself John J. Austin called, and said he had been sent by you to see Miss Lee. I sent for her, but she had seen him, it is supposed, and she was not to be found. Thereupon this stranger declared himself a detective, and said that Miss Lee was accused of some crime. He rushed away in hot pursuit; but, so far as I can learn, she has not been found. I am at a loss what steps to take in the matter, so pray come up.—Yours in difficulty, S. P. BURTON."

The other letter was from the perfidious John Jacob himself, and read as follows:

"DOCTOR AUSTIN—*Dear Sir:* Knowing that Doctor Burton will write to you, if he has not already done so, I pen you this. I beg that you will not judge me until this affair has been sifted to the bottom; when, I believe, in spite of the fact that I won your confidence by practising deceit, you will admit that I have been, as much as I could be, your friend. Do not seek to move in this matter; be-

lieve me, I am speaking for your good when I say that by so doing you will injure yourself and your ward as well. Also remember my warning against Mr. Brady. *I* am a detective, but I am neither your enemy nor Miss Armyn's. Mr. Brady is.—Yours, JOHN JACOB AUSTIN."

It is impossible to describe the feelings with which Doctor Austin read these letters. His wife, who knew little or nothing of the actual state of Lenore Armyn's affairs, must not be alarmed or enlightened. So he sat in silence until he could speak with tolerable calmness, and then, rising, he said,

"Mother, I must start for the city this morning, and it's a blessed thing the stage goes to-day. Just wait breakfast while I run and tell the driver to wait or call for me, and meanwhile toss a few things into my small valise." And before Mrs. Austin could open her mouth to ask a question he was out of the house.

As he closed his door a man who was passing the gate at the moment looked up quickly.

"Goot morninks," he said, affably. "I hobes I sees you vell?"

"Quite well, Peterkin," replied the doctor. "Going to the hotel?"

"Yah; shust took a sthroll pefore eading."

"Then, Peterkin, won't you just tell Marks, the stage driver, that I want him to call for me this morning? It will oblige me very much," said the doctor.

"Ton't vant oplige! To it ver nodings, mooch bleasure, ferry." And the Teuton resumed his march towards the hotel.

Peterkin was a pack-pedlar, who had made his appearance in the neighbourhood a little more than a month before, since when he had made Fairlie his headquarters; tramping off bright and early mornings and usually returning at night.

While Doctor Austin returned to his wife and his breakfast Peterkin trudged on towards the little hotel. The breakfast bell was sounding when he reached the place, but Peterkin went straight up to his room, where he remained fully ten minutes. Then he lumbered down stairs, and noisily entered the breakfast room.

Everybody was at breakfast—even Mr. J. B. Brady. Peterkin sat down and began to eat ravenously. Then he looked up and bawled out suddenly,

"Shay! you mishter vip shnapper, how soon pefore your vagon stards?"

"Half an hour, Dutchy. Want to go?"

"Vell den, I told you do sthop vor Dogdor Aushtin; he sait so." And Peterkin made a lunge at a huge potato.

Five minutes afterwards Mr. J. B. Brady arose and quitted the room.

"Vonder vot mate him losht his abbedide," said the German, gazing after him wonderingly.

Mr. Brady's "abbedide" had failed rather suddenly.

When Marks drove out of the stable-yard with the rickety old coach Mr. Brady stood with a huge travelling-bag beside him, ready for a start, and just as he took his seat Peterkin came scrambling down stairs pack and all.

"Vait!" he shouted; "ton't you see me gomin'?"

Marks both saw and heard him, and soon Peterkin too sat within the coach grinning complacently at Brady the while.

"I vill haf goompany on de vay," he said, affably; "ferry bleasand, ferry." But Mr. Brady scorned to reply.

When Dr. Austin came out to take his seat, great was his surprise, not to say annoyance, to find that Brady was his fellow-passenger. He wondered too that Peterkin had not informed him of his intentions to be his companion on the journey. He nodded stiffly to Brady, and then, as the coach rumbled off, addressed the German,

"So you are going away, Peterkin; going far?"

"Koink do te pig down, sir. I haf god oud of everydinks."

"Oh, going to fill up your pack," said the doctor, and then he relapsed into silence. Presently he looked up as if he had evolved an idea out of a medley of thought, and addressed Brady,

"You are not quitting Fairlie for good, Mr. Brady?" he inquired.

"Oh no," said Brady, carelessly; "only taking a little run into the city. Do you go as far?"

"Why, yes. To-night is the first of Darley's famous course of medical lectures, and I would not miss them. Shall you attend, sir?"

"Hardly. I'm not much in that line."

"Too bad, really! I should like to have you attend to-night with me, it would seem social like."

"Oh! since you are so kind I may avail myself of the invitation. Where do you stop, doctor?"

"At the Sherman. Happy to see you there." Then the doctor took from his pocket a medical pamphlet and began to read.

When they arrived at the station, which they did, of course, half an hour too early,

Doctor Austin watched for an opportunity to whisper to Peterkin,

"Follow me to the platform I want to speak with you."

He sauntered away in the direction indicated, and presently Peterkin lounged along.

"When you gave my message to the driver, Peterkin," said the doctor gravely, "did any one else hear you? Think, now."

Peterkin looked down at his boots and up at the sky, and then said, slowly,

"Vy, so helb me gracious? I vend righd straighd in mid de dable, ant dold dot tam vool so effery poty coot hear. Dit you dinks I vorgat him?"

"No," replied the doctor," smiling slightly. "Did—Mr. Brady hear you, Peterkin?"

Peterkin reflected. "Yaas," he said. "I reggollced, pecause I said id just pefore Mishter Prady god up und lefd de dables, und I sait he had lost his abbedide. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Just after you told Marks he left the table, did he? Well, it's all right, Peterkin."

"Yah! id's all righd!" then in a lower tone still, "Loog here, to you lige Mishter Prady?"

"Do you, Peterkin?" retorted the doctor, somewhat taken aback by the inquiry.

"Nix! I ton'd. Und loog here, he'sh a pad man, ton'd you haf nodinks to do vid him," and before the doctor could frame a reply, Peterkin waddled away, and never came near him again during the entire journey.

"Good heavens," muttered the doctor, "that's just what John—I mean that rascally detective—said. What can Peterkin know about Brady?"

But Peterkin gave him no chance to ask that question; neither did Brady appear over anxious to converse; and so they hurried on towards the city, the doctor busy with his own thoughts, Brady wrapped in a cloud of smoke, and Peterkin smoking and jabbering with every one who would talk or listen.

"Have a carriage, sir?" said a slouching looking fellow, appearing at Brady's elbow, as soon as his feet had touched the platform of the depot. "Carriage to any part of the city, sir." But Mr. Brady turned impatiently away, and seemed to be looking for some one in the crowd.

"Going my way?" asked Doctor Austin, affably, coming to the side of the Englishman.

"Well—no, doctor—I'm looking for a friend to meet me," replied Brady, still gazing about him.

"Carriage, sir," said the slouching man, pressing up to the doctor's side; but Doctor Austin grasped his little valise firmly, and hurried on. As he walked quickly away Mr. Brady seemed to have abandoned all hope of finding his friend, for he set his face in the same direction, and followed in the wake of the doctor.

"Carriage, sir," said the slouching man to Peterkin, who now came shuffling along, not far behind Brady. "Carriage to any part of the city, sir." But Peterkin trudged along and never heeded him.

Doctor Austin was the first to emerge from the depot. He looked up and down at the waiting hacks and brawling hackmen for a moment, and then motioned to one of the men, whispered an address in his ear, and entered the vehicle. Before the driver could mount his box Mr. Brady stepped out from a sheltering doorway, and seizing the arm of a second driver, pointed to the first.

"Do you see that man? Follow him, quick; don't lose sight of that carriage an instant," he said, and springing into the carriage closed the door behind him. At the same moment the slovenly man, who had clambered upon his box minus a fare, stooped to gather up his reins.

"Sthop till I gid in," cried a voice beside him. And looking down, the man beheld Peterkin, gesticulating strangely. "Loog here," said Peterkin. "To you see' dat hack? follow it like tam." And Peterkin pointed to the hack containing Mr. Brady, and then sprang within this one, so unceremoniously chartered by himself.

Away rolled the carriage containing Doctor Austin. Away rolled the second and pursuing carriage, containing Mr. Jason Bradwardine. And away rolled the third carriage, driven by Rob Jocelyn, who sat whistling upon the box, all unconscious that his passenger was the man of all others whom he most desired to see, Francis Ferrars, the English detective.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE GREEN BOUDOIR.

NEIL BATHURST had been baffled at the outset in his search for Lenore. From the moment when she had passed out of the grounds of the asylum not a trace of her could he find. He felt almost inclined to accept the statement of the insane girl, that she had flown "up, up, up," as truth. All the street-car conductors had been interviewed, but no one could remember having carried a passenger answering to

the description of Lenore. The man who carried Lenore, being the most obtuse of his kind, never once connected the handsome, well-dressed girl, described by the detective, with the passenger he had mentally set down as a "dowdy school girl," for each man sees with his own eyes, and ever will. And so the first and only clue to Lenore's whereabouts was hopelessly lost. But the detective was far from being discouraged. One thing was now certain, Lenore Armyn was in the city somewhere, and—she would not be apt to escape from the city. He had promptly summoned Rob Jocelyn to his assistance, and they had set themselves the task of cutting off the retreat of Lenore; if she presented herself at any depot, if she attempted to leave the city by any of the public thoroughfares, her arrest was certain. And now, having made sure that she was within their circle, they began the narrowing process, a systematic search of the city must sooner or later unearth their game. Having decided upon this course of action they commenced their work, vigorously.

Neil Bathurst had written the doctor, knowing that he would immediately be notified by Doctor Burton. He knew now that Lenore must rely upon her own resources. Doctor Austin was as ignorant of her whereabouts as was Bathurst himself. But he, Neil, did not doubt but that the doctor would come immediately to the city; and he felt equally sure that Jason Bradwardine would follow him as fast as possible. So Rob Jocelyn had stationed himself on the lookout, with what result we have seen in the last chapter.

Doctor Austin had driven straight to the Asylum, followed of course by the other two carriages, and, as he had dismissed his carriage there, and entered, valise in hand, Bradwardine had very sensibly concluded that he would not be found at the "Sherman," and then had ordered his driver to take him to his Wabash Avenue boarding-house, whither he was closely followed by Rob and his eccentric fare.

When Peterkin had seen his game safely within the walls of his boarding-house he had ordered Rob to drive him to the nearest German hotel; and this Rob did at once, wondering much what this "old Dutchman" could have in common with the elegant Jason Bradwardine.

"It's a queer lay out," mused Rob, as he drove his horses stableward. "I shall run around and look after little Dutchy as soon as possible."

But when Rob looked in at the "lager beer house" "little Dutchy," with his pack, had vanished.

Of course Neil Bathurst was now satisfied that Lenore Armyn had seen him, and his thoughts naturally reverted to his interview with Jess Warren, and the peculiarity of her manner when stating that Lenore had seemed to desire not to meet him. At his earliest opportunity he called upon the blonde widow, and a few judicious arguments convinced the lady that it would be to her interest not to attempt throwing any more straws in the way of Mr. Bathurst. She admitted that Lenore had seen him, and described the occasion. Neil was not slow in making another discovery, which, although it was a side issue at present, was interesting to him, namely, that Rob Jocelyn and Kate Seaton, during the three months of his absence, had become wonderfully good friends. One day, during a call at Mrs. Arteveldt's, Kate Seaton had put a note into Neil's hand, saying,

"Here is a note, Mr. Bathurst, which Miss Durand gave me the last time she was here, and requested me to give to you."

Neil took the note from her hand, feeling not a little surprised, and he said carelessly,

"So Miss Durand and yourself are on very good terms, Miss Seaton."

"I! N— No. Not exactly, Mr. Bathurst; Miss Durand is a great favourite with Mrs. Arteveldt; she calls here very often to see her."

Neil said no more, but he made this mental comment,

"Miss Seaton and Miss Durand do not approve of each other."

Miss Durand's note was brief; it contained Miss Durand's compliments, and a request that Mr. Bathurst would call on her at his earliest convenience; the note was written on the daintiest of perfumed paper, and Neil thought that the handwriting was characterless and insipid in the extreme. Neil was a believer in the individuality of penmanship. On the day following the receipt of this note the young detective turned his steps in the direction of the Durand mansion.

"It's just as I expected," he muttered to himself, as he ascended the steps. "This Arteveldt affair has published me; now every one here will know me for the detective who tried at Durand's burglary case."

He entered the house, and was about to send his name up to Miss Dnrand, when Mr. Durand, the host, came down the stairs, and extended to him a warm welcome.

"Nonsense; he should not go up to Miss Aura's boudoir until he had chatted with him; Miss Aura could wait a little;

he must come in and see Mrs. Durand. She was quite an invalid at present; nothing serious, of course, but a little company now and then cheered her."

There was no help for it. Neil was ushered into the presence of Mrs. Durand before he could frame an excuse. He was startled at the change in her. She was at best a fussy, nervous body, given to indulging in harmless maladies, but now she looked really ill.

Mrs. Durand belonged to that class of women who are fond of regaling their friends with a detailed account of their symptoms and sufferings, and she found Neil Bathurst an attentive listener. He even asked one or two questions, and when he arose to leave the invalid's room his face seemed a shade graver than when he entered it. When they were safely out of hearing of the invalid Neil turned to Mr. Durand and said in a low tone,

"Mr. Durand, I must request a private interview with you as soon as I can find time for it. I am working night and day now. But there is a matter that must be put before you at the earliest possible moment. I called to-day, by appointment with Miss Durand. I will not come here to see you, but I beg you, when I send for you, to meet me promptly, and without fail."

Without stopping for a reply he signalled to the waiting servant, and requested to be shown to Miss Durand's presence.

Daintiest of beauties was Aura Durand, as she arose to receive him, and Neil Bathurst could not repress an admiring glance as he looked upon her. How lovely she was, and how wonderfully well the green magnificence of the room harmonized with that loveliness.

Her reception of the detective was as cordial as it was charming; and they chatted very pleasantly; first about the lady herself, and her health, then about Neil; and how cunningly Miss Durand had surmised that he was the detective who had tried to find a clue to "Poor papa's stolen money," then about the Arteveldt tragedy; and while they were upon this subject, Aura said:

"To tell the truth, Mr. Bathurst, it was, in part, to hear you talk of this that I took the liberty of asking you to call on me. Poor Clarence and I were very good friends, you know. Poor fellow, his love affairs have been most unfortunate."

"His love affairs! Am I to infer that there were other affairs? I had heard that he was once most devoted to you, Miss Durand; did you treat him so cruelly?"

Her eyes dilated, and just for one instant her face paled; then she answered, with a rippling little laugh:

"What an absurd report! Excuse me, Mr. Bathurst, but how our deeds of friendship will be misinterpreted; I will confide this much in you; I was aware of a love affair of Mr. Arteveldt's, one that would have displeased his mother very much, had she known it. Poor Clarence used to confide in me sometimes, and the young lady was, after a fashion, my friend. I was sorry that I had to know anything of the affair, so many people insisted upon mistaking me for the principal figure. But I could not avoid it — under the circumstances."

"Am I to understand, Miss Durand, that your friend or companion, Miss Annin, was the object of Mr. Arteveldt's affections at one time?"

"You are to understand nothing," cried Miss Durand, with a pretty pout. "See, now, what a blunderer I am! I never intended to tell you the identity of the lady."

"Well, you did not mention the name of Miss Annin."

Aura became suddenly grave. She leaned towards the detective and said, half beseechingly, "Mr. Bathurst, let us not talk of Miss Annin. She is not with me now. I had to give her up, and I did like her so much."

On the detective's side, at least, there had been an undercurrent to all this conversation, and he now asked almost abruptly:

"Are you and Miss Annin divided in friendship?"

"No," said Miss Durand, mournfully, "I want to be poor Nina's friend. But—I could not keep her in this house after—Mr. Bathurst I will trust you thus far, poor Nina had an insatiable longing for dress and jewels. I could bear my own losses, but not to see others losers."

A strange look came into the face of Neil Bathurst.

"Do you know where Miss Annin lives now?" he asked.

"Yes—she lives with a Mrs. Rogers, an aunt, I believe."

"Do you know Mrs. Rogers?"

"I! Mercy, no!"

"Miss Durand," said the detective after a moment's silence, "please be frank with me. Have you any of Miss Annin's handwriting in your possession?"

Again that startled look in the eyes of Aura Durand.

"I—must have, of course, somewhere. Why?"

"May I ask you to give me something, anything, in her handwriting?"

The girl considered for a moment.

"I don't just know where to put my hand on her writing now Mr. Bathurst, but I will search for something written by her, and you shall have it."

"Thanks. May I call for it some evening soon?"

"I shall be glad to have you do so. You are always welcome, Mr. Bathurst."

"Then—I may come oftener."

She smiled at this, but made no reply. At this moment the footman entered the room, saying, "Miss Annin is here, Miss Durand. She says she must see you."

A strange look came into the face of Miss Durand.

"Tell her I am not at home," she said, quite sternly.

"Yes, miss." The footman turned, and there in the doorway stood Miss Annin.

"I felt so much at home that I came right up, Aura," she said, entering the room with perfect composure. "Oh, Mr. Bathurst! I did not know that you were here. I am really glad to see you. I am afraid that I intrude," at the same time seating herself nonchalantly.

"Not in the least," replied the detective, arising. "I was just taking my leave. Miss Annin, when we meet again I hope it won't be to part so soon."

Then he said adieu to Aura Durand, who had not addressed one word to Miss Annin, and followed the servant from the room. At the head of the stairs he halted suddenly.

"I have dropped my glove," he said, and before the servant could perform the office, stepped back to the door of the green boudoir. The glove lay on the very threshold, and as he stooped to recover it, he caught these words,—

"What do you want now?" It was Miss Durand's voice, with all the coo and softness gone out of it.

"One thousand dollars," replied the cool voice of Miss Annin.

"What! More money?"

The detective lifted his head and came away, the glove in his hand, and a peculiar smile hovering about his mouth.

Half an hour later he burst into the presence of Rob Jocelyn, with these enigmatical words upon his lips, "The next time my imagination runs off into a nightmare I won't throw cold water on her. I'll run after with all the legs I possess."

Then he closed his mouth and utterly refused to open it again on the subject. But later Rob might have heard him muttering as if to some invisible charmer,—

"My dear, wait a bit! I'll teach you to try to outwit a detective!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THREE SHADOWS.

FOR nearly a week Lenore, in the character of the "Ball-tosser's daughter," had been domiciled at Mrs. Horne's, and the very strangeness of her quarters gave her a sense of security. Mrs. Horne was a fortune-teller; a reader of the planets; and was altogether a remarkable woman. She was a large, fine-looking person, and her manners and conversation were refined to the last degree. She made a fair living by reading the stars for the benefit of the credulous ones, and made merry at their expense when in the bosom of her family. Between Mrs. Horne and Mrs. Harris there existed an affinity which Lenore recognized, but could not comprehend.

Two very pleasant rooms in the retired portion of Mrs. Horne's house had been placed at Lenore's disposal, and here Mrs. Harris came every day, and twice a day, to "show her the steps," and afterwards regale her ears with wonderful tales of stage successes, all tending in one direction.

Mrs. Harris had dreamed a dream; she had fancied herself able to win Lenore's consent to allow her to act as her guardian and agent; she knew that the beauty, grace, and intelligence of the girl would quickly make for her a prominent position among the best of the profession, which, as she averred, was "making all the money in the business."

Lenore was to become a vocalist and dancer; she was to sign an agreement giving Mrs. Harris full control over her for a year, at least, and that lady was to reap a golden harvest, travelling comfortably with Lenore, drawing her salary, and pocketing the lion's share. This was the dream of Mrs. Harris, and to this end all her arguments tended.

Lenore had but one desire, one thought; to vanish from the world that had known her, to lose her identity entirely. She was not blind to the motive which actuated Mrs. Harris; the keen wit of that lady seemed to react upon her *protégée*; neither was she dazzled by the allurements of the stage as pictured by the ballet mistress. But she saw in such a life the opportunity she sought of losing herself. No one would dream of looking for Lenore Armyn upon the variety stage. And she believed that she could adopt that profession and still be her best self. Let Mrs. Harris reap the benefit; what she wanted was safety.

Mrs. Harris was a tenacious woman,

and her shrewdness had its weak points. She was known to nearly every performer in her particular branch of the profession. Mrs. Harris was not a dramatic actress, and never had been. Every performer in the city then knew her as they knew managers, property-men, and bill-posters, and Mrs. Harris had a certain pride. Lenore had expressed a wish to be seen by no one, and she would not come to the house of Mrs. Harris to be displayed to the friends of that lady as her new pet and *protégée*. Mrs. Harris looked upon Lenore as a prize, and she wished to display her as such.

"There's no earthly chance of any of your people seeing you," argued Mrs. Harris, "and it will do you good to see some of these people. I'm going to speak for a box at R——'s to-night, and you must go with me; no one will see you; we will go in at the stage-door; of course it's not such a theatre as you will act in. I wouldn't allow you to act there; but R—— is an old friend of mine, and I want you to see the worst side of the life." By which she meant that she wanted to make the poor, half-paid, half-starved, wholly-besotted actors at R——'s stare in astonishment, and wonder "where Harris found a girl like that."

Constant dropping will wear a stone. For three days Mrs. Harris harped upon this theme, and at last Lenore, seeing that the ballet mistress was preparing to be actually offended if she did not consent, and feeling that she, Lenore, could ill afford to lose her rather expensive patronage just then, consented to accompany her to R——'s variety theatre. This put the ballet mistress in rare good humour, and she lavished praise and advice in profusion.

"I'll tell you what you must do," she said eagerly. "This business all depends on your style. Now your style is good, but you dress too plain. You must dress for effect. Adopt some particular style, and stick to it. Now for you nothing could be nobbier than a boy's cut-out, have your hair cut short; it would curl all over your head, wouldn't it?—have a tony jacket, double-breasted and all, like a boy's, with a cute breast-pocket and bright buttons; then get one of those cute caps, just like a boy wears, only seal-skin; and, my, wouldn't you be a stunner! Why, no one would know you for the same girl!"

"Do you think they would not?"

"I know they would not."

Mrs. Harris had not expected that Lenore would so readily adopt this advice, and when the girl drew out her purse and counted out some money she asked,

"What do you want?"

"Get me a jacket and cap such as you described, please; and—can you cut my hair?"

"Do you really mean it?" cried Mrs. Harris. "I'll go right away and get the things; but—it's a pity to cut your hair, after all; just cut off the front, and coil the rest on top of your head loose; it's so thick and wavy, it will do nicely that way."

"Just as you please," said Lenore, indifferently.

"I'll get you a cute silk handkerchief to stick in the side pocket," said the ballet mistress, rapturously. "And a sailor collar and tie for your neck. I'll show 'em!" This last, spoken after Mrs. Harris was outside the door, was not intended for Lenore's benefit.

A little before the opening of the performance at R——'s varieties—there was no going up of the curtain, because of the absence of that ascending and descending fascination from R——'s stage—Mrs. Harris and a jaunty looking young lady entered one of the two stage boxes, that were "boxes" in the finest sense of the word; they were just high enough to stand up in, and just wide enough and deep enough to hold four small wooden chairs that might have come from Mrs. Harris's sanctum, so very easy were they under a burden. This "box" was fearfully and wonderfully dirty, guiltless of paint, and odorous of tobacco, brandy and beer.

The nose of the jaunty young lady ascended perceptibly; seeing which, Mrs. Harris said, with a gay little laugh,—

"Oh! don't put on airs, child! I told you that we were not coming to a grand theatre; this is no high-toned place, but you'll see a first-rate performance, and the people here think a deal of me."

This climax brought a smile to the face of the young lady, who readily understood that Mrs. Harris chose to come here where people would do her honour, rather than sit an unrecognized guest at a first-class entertainment. Spite of her repugnance for the low, dingy, dirty dive, for such it was, Lenore began to feel amused and a trifle curious.

"After all," she thought bitterly, as she peered from behind the dingy curtain of the box, out upon the bare stage, "after all, I have been in a worse place," thinking with a shudder of that day at Gentleman Jeff's.

Mrs. Harris darted in and out at the box door, chattering with any and every one behind the scenes, and, after a little, Lenore became accustomed to this. When at last

the performance commenced Mrs. Harris seated herself, prepared to enjoy it, and *encore* everything.

"You must clap your hands," she whispered to Lenore; "if you don't they will think you are stuck up!"

Smiling a little at the idea of being considered "stuck up" by these people, Lenore clapped her hands in feeble emulation of Mrs. Harris.

The small auditorium was tolerably well filled, with rough-looking men for the most part, who lounged about the deal tables and drank much beer, applauding from time to time with the stout bottoms of their glasses.

There was the usual "First Part," with a coloured individual at either end of a half-circle, composed of the "strength of the company;" and this was followed by a young man with a very red face, who danced a "silver clog," to the entire satisfaction of the audience. Then followed young women in soiled and much abbreviated finery, who sang ballads and comic songs with cracked and tobacco strangled voices. Next, two lads, eccentrically dressed, who jabbered and howled in broken accents intended for the German brogue, and kicked up their heels at intervals, in a fearful and wonderful manner. Next, a pretty girl executed a very creditable song and dance, after which the young man who had danced the silver clog, "did" a jig, and afterwards a hornpipe. Following him came a stout young lady, who announced in a voice like a fishmonger, and with a fling of the heels, that she was "Good-for-nothing Nan."

From time to time, as the performance went on, Mrs. Harris, no doubt carried away by her enthusiasm, drew back the curtain, so that Lenore, shrink as she might, was exposed to the view of those on the stage and also of some person or persons who sat behind the curtains of the box opposite. This opposite box was situated very near the dressing-room of the female performers, and from time to time these ladies were seen flitting in and out, but the occupant never once permitted his face to be seen. Presently this personage turned the ladies out with scant ceremony, and sent for R—— himself.

"Who are those ladies opposite?" he asked, abruptly, when the portly, red-faced, beer-perfumed manager made his appearance.

R—— recognized the stranger as one who had spent money freely there on one or two occasions, and he answered affably,

"The old woman is a Mrs. Harris, old stager, ballet mistress, and all that, you know. The other is some victim she has picked up to fleece, I suppose; probably the girl fancies that the old woman will make her a fortune on the stage—that's a hobby of Harris's."

"A hobby—or a pretext?"

"No; the woman is really stage-mad; she has starved half her life trying to hang to the tail of some snap company or other. She will get a few girls together, and if a man will come along and show a little roll of money, off she goes with the girls; she won't be left behind, mind you."

"And—are you sure that this young lady is in her hands?"

"I think she is. Harris told me, when she came down to secure the box, that she had a treasure, a regular beauty, and that she was going to take her East and bring her out in style. If she does, it will be at some one's expense; she is as poor as Lazarus."

"Ah! will you tell me where this Harris lives?"

R—— hesitated. "I don't know, really," he said.

"Nonsense!" interrupted the other, shortly, "of course you do. Look here, R——, I'm willing to make it to your interest to help me a little. Now, I am ignorant of all theatrical business, but if I wanted to play manager couldn't you put me in the way of it. And—if I say I will give you twenty-five dollars to be placed where I can get a fair view of that girl when she leaves here, can't it be done?"

R—— thought it could, and the two men fell to talking very earnestly.

Meanwhile, over in the other box Lenore had been growing nervous, over the too frequent lifting of their dingy curtain; and she was growing angry, too. She had expostulated mildly, but Mrs. Harris, who had been behind the scenes and had there indulged in a glass or two of beer, seemed to have grown quite reckless. Finally the annoyance became unendurable, and Lenore's wrath got the better of her prudence. Leaning forward, as Mrs. Harris was about to pull aside the curtain, she laid a resolute hand upon it, and said with a flash of the eyes that acted like a small shower-bath upon the vivacious ballet mistress.

"Madam, if you touch that curtain again I will go instantly. I will not allow you to exhibit me in this vile place so shamelessly. I very much regret having come with you."

Mrs. Harris was not slow to perceive that she had gone too far, and that she had overrated the influence she believed she possessed over Lenore.

"Why, I declare! how nervous you are," she said, dropping the curtain; "nobody can see you from the audience, you sit so far back."

"I do not choose to be stared at by those stage people," replied Lenore, coldly. And Mrs. Harris did not lift the curtain again.

When they left the place there were no street cars near, and Lenore expressed a preference for walking, so they set off briskly. But they were not unobserved. Scarcely had they emerged into the street when a tall form came out of the darkness and followed stealthily after them, and behind this a second figure glided, and, on the opposite side of the street a third, and all three moving in the direction taken by Mrs. Harris and Lenore. But the first person was a bungler, or he did not understand the sharpness of Mrs. Harris.

It was not an unusual thing for solitary women to be followed so late at night, and the ballet mistress began to think that she had displayed Lenore a little too freely; she did not want anything to occur to alarm Lenore, and—some of those men might have seen her and attempt to follow. She began to be restless and observant, and before they had reached the street where Lenore lived she had discovered that they were followed. She was not aware of more than one shadow, however.

"I'll tell you what," she said, suddenly, "I have been thinking that we may as well be cautious. Now I don't suppose any one would follow us to-night, but sometime they might, and the sharper we are the safer you will be. Now you just keep right on with me, and go in my house, I will let you out at the back door, and you can run straight through the alley and in at Mrs. Horne's back door, and no one will be the wiser."

"I didn't know there was an alley," said Lenore.

"Well, there is, and no one would ever suspect it. It's the safest thing in the world. While you are supposed to be in my house you are away on the next street. You had better always go in and out that way. I will run through with you to-night, so that you will feel safe."

Perhaps the reader will connect this blind alley linking the two houses with the wonderful affinity between the fortune-teller and ballet mistress. If so—well—we have each a right to our own opinions.

Lenore availed herself of the blind alley, and the three shadows saw her enter the house of the ballet mistress.

"She does live there, and I will have her in my power before two suns set," thought the first shadow.

"He has followed those two women; then I, too, must watch them," thought the second shadow.

"He believes he has found his game, and I must secure it first. What the mischief is that other fellow dodging him for!" thought the third shadow, and then the shadows followed each other back to town.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM CUBA.

LENORE was not inclined to sleep after her visit to R——'s varieties. Mrs. Harris, in spite of her caution, had set her thinking. What if some one had followed them? Where would she go if again compelled to flee?

The fire was very low in her little wood stove; she replenished it from the box, that she perceived was nearly empty, and sat down before it to think. To think of so many things. Nearly an hour she sat thus, and then she discovered that the room was growing chill. It was useless to try and sleep; she felt as if sleep had forsaken her forever. So she arose and put the last sticks of wood upon the smouldering coals. The very last. She glanced down into the empty box, and something there caught her eye and held her spell-bound. In the bottom of the box she had seen an old newspaper, placed there by some cleanly hand, and her eyes were riveted to these startling headlines.

FLIGHT OF A BRIDE ON HER WEDDING NIGHT, AND VIOLENT DEATH OF A BRIDEGROOM!

THE BRIDE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN THE MURDERESS!

TERRIBLE SCENE AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE MURDERED MAN!
SAD FATE OF YOUNG ARTEVELDT!

How long does Lenore sit staring at these terrible lines? She cannot tell, then or after. But after a time she snatches at the paper and reads every word of the three or four closely-printed columns. She reads that Lenore Armyn-Arteveldt is accused of murder. She reads that a price is set upon her head. And then darkness comes over her, she falls forward; for the first time in her life she has fainted.

For a long time she lies there, and she will never be whiter, or colder, or quieter, when dead. Then slowly, shudderingly,

she comes back to consciousness, and, relentlessly, the truth comes back to her. By her side is the fatal paper still. She takes it in her hand and sinks wearily down again; she lies there prostrate, feeling her misery, her forlornness, her despair. But after a time the fierce brave blood flows back to her heart, and she is Lenore Armyn once more.

"They want me!" she says, scornfully; "they shall find me. I will go to them, and defy them, the fools, the blind—but no. I am bound, bound! bound! I cannot free myself from this charge at the expense of a broken oath, an oath to the dead. I will not, I dare not; I must hide like a criminal still. I must live a lie now more than ever."

The fire had died out now, but she never heeded that. She took up the paper once more and reperused the full and sensational account of her own wedding, with all its horrible after results.

"This is what that detective wanted," she thought, shudderingly; "to arrest me as a murderess! Well, I won't help him to find me. I'll make Harris take me away immediately; fortunately, I am not yet out of funds."

Never once did she give a regretful thought to her murdered husband; she had for him not one thrill of pity.

The day that followed that night of sleeplessness dawned upon a pale, stern-faced girl, who could not even smile at the lively sallies of Mrs. Horne, and who sat at the breakfast-table like a ghost at a banquet. She had not closed her eyes in sleep all that long night through; she had been thinking and planning; she must leave the city, and for the first time she began to realize how very difficult this task would be. And yet—they had searched for her three months, and had not found her.

The day wore on, and Lenore began to be anxious for the appearance of Mrs. Harris; but that lady was very busy on that particular morning. At an unusually early hour she had received a caller of an unusual sort. This visitor was a gentleman, the same, by the way, that had occupied the box opposite Mrs. Harris at R—'s varieties, and his appearance made an instant and favourable impression upon the ballet mistress. He was tall, and what she called a "splendid looking man," that is to say, he had splendid white teeth, dark hair and whiskers, bold black eyes, and regular features; he was a man of at least thirty-five, dressed in the height of the fashion, and wearing an abundance of costly jewellery. His manner was polished and graceful, and his address simply perfection. Lest the reader should mistake this personage, who has not been described before, let him here be introduced.

Mrs. Harris's visitor, acting a part as instructed by Manager R——, for a consideration, is none other than Jason Bradwardine. It will be remembered that, according to the discoveries of Rob Jocelyn, Bradwardine had seen Lenore Armyn before she left Fairlie to pay that fateful visit to Kate Seaton. But Lenore had not seen him. All his observations had been taken when the girl was unconscious of his proximity. Her visit to the city was totally unexpected to him, and he had been unable to find any clue to her whereabouts. After a time he found that she had gone cityward, but that was all. He had followed promptly then, and had been seen, as we know, by Rob Jocelyn. The detective had made one mistake; he had underrated the work accomplished by Bradwardine's private inquirer, he had not discovered at first that the man had found his prey, only to let it escape him. Through his chance presence at the dive theatre, Jason Bradwardine had again stumbled upon Lenore, and, spite of her boy's hat and sailor collar, had recognized her. And this time he did not mean to let her escape him. He was not aware of the two shadows that had followed him on the previous night, and neither himself nor Mrs. Harris were conscious that they were under constant surveillance. Nevertheless such was the case, the second pursuing shadow of the night previous, who was no less a personrge than the affable Peterkin, or Francis Ferrars, was ever at his heels, while the third shadow, our friend Rob Jocelyn, being more thoroughly informed than was Ferrars, had left Bradwardine to his own devices, knowing well that the said devices would soon bring him to the vicinity of Mrs. Harris, and had contented himself with keeping a close watch upon the comings and goings of the ballet mistress, with what result we will know later.

Mr. Bradwardine introduced himself to the ballet mistress as Senor Castro, a Cuban. He had recently bought a fine theatre in Havana, and had come to the States for a company. He was quite new in the theatrical business, he frankly admitted, but he had his own ideas about a theatre, and—he had the means to carry out his ideas. He meant to make his theatre the success of the South. He wanted talent, of course, but—he wanted talent allied to beauty. He wanted new faces, and, if they were sufficiently attractive, their ability would not be called in question. He had already engaged many

people, but there was yet something wanting. To be popular in the South an actress should be blonde; unfortunately, his most charming ladies were pronounced brunettes; what he wanted was a blonde lady who was keen-witted, graceful and beautiful, and who could be made a feature in some grand "spectacles" he intended to produce upon his stage. He did not care whether the young lady was a novice or not; she must be beautiful, intelligent, and blonde. Such a one he would pay magnificently, and, finally, could Mrs. Harris put him in the way of finding such a lady?

Mrs. Harris thought she could, if she chose, and then began a skirmish of wits.

The gentleman from Cuba, in obedience to a hint from Manager R——, placed in the hand of the ballet mistress a generous advance fee, and after a little, offered to take her to Cuba as mistress of the wardrobe.

Then Mrs. Harris told him of Lenore, describing her in glowing terms, and taking care to state that she, Mrs. Harris, had complete control over this paragon. Finally, the Cuban made her a magnificent offer for the services of herself and the young lady—provided she was as charming as described—and Mrs. Harris said that she would consider the matter; which meant, that she would see Lenore, and, if she could be beguiled into taking this trip to Cuba, they would go. Senor Castro was to call at evening for his answer, and if Mrs. Harris had decided to accept, Lenore was then to be exhibited; after which, contracts would be signed; the Cuban gentleman assuming control of their movements forthwith; they to draw salary from that hour, and the Senor to assume their expenses.

"I have taken a house, of which my sister has charge," said the Senor. "It is my purpose to assemble my people there, before starting South; if you accept my offer, I shall wish that yourself and charge take rooms there immediately."

Mrs. Harris expressed herself satisfied with this arrangement, and the gentleman from Cuba took his leave. "He had stayed too long already," he said, smilingly, "and he had an appointment for twelve o'clock." Which was very true; he had an appointment for that hour, with that useful personage, the widow O'Neil.

Mrs. Harris closed the door after the retreating form of her visitor, feeling as if the days of downy ease were again dawning upon her.

"If I can only manage that girl," she muttered, "and I think I can; it's time now to try the frightening-dodge."

But she was agreeably disappointed; Lenore listened with evident interest to her rapturous recital. Mrs. Harris did not confine herself strictly to the truth; she spoke of Senor Castro as quite an old acquaintance, who had appeared unexpectedly; and then told of his great wealth, his splendid theatre in the South, and last, of his "splendid offer."

"What do you think of that?" she said, triumphantly. "Do you think we can do any better? do you think——"

"I think that you had better accept it," said Lenore, quietly.

"Do you! will you really go?"

"I really will. The sooner the better. When does this Senor——"

"Senor Castro."

"When does Senor Castro come for our answer?"

"This evening; and he will expect to see you," replied the ballet mistress, hugging herself, in her delight. "When will you be ready to go to his house, where his company is to gather?"

"I will go at any time, and I will meet him this evening. You are sure he will take us?"

"Sure!" with a little laugh. "Yes, I am sure."

Then the ballet mistress launched out into a lecture upon the necessity for certain finery and "wardrobe" appurtenances, and Lenore listened with a preoccupied air. She was to go away, far away; that was settled; that was all she cared to know. Oh, if she need never see or hear of this hateful city again.

A little after two o'clock on that afternoon, a tall peanut vendor stood at the corner nearest the shabby domicile of Mrs. Harris; it did not look like a particularly good stand, but the man seemed quite satisfied, and smoked a short, black pipe with great apparent content, as he plied his rather dull trade. He had been in that vicinity all day, and he looked as if he intended remaining there for a week to come. But now a light carriage, driven by a stylish-looking young man, came around the corner and stopped before the vendor's cart.

"Give us a light, old fellow," said the young man, leaning forward, with an unlighted cigar between his lips. Then, as the man approached the carriage to comply with this request, he said in a low, quick tone:

"Pull out, Rob, I hold the ropes, and your time is too precious to put in here,

Pull out, and trust the wind-up to the widow O'Neil."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A TIMELY ENCOUNTER.

After warning Rob Jocelyn to withdraw from his post, Neil Bathurst drove straight to an obscure little hotel, where, by appointment, he expected to meet Mr. Durand. His business was of a strange and delicate nature; but it was business that could no longer be neglected. He found the old gentleman already at the rendezvous; they at once took possession of a snug little private room, and Neil opened the conversation by saying,

"Mr. Durand, a man of my profession thinks nothing strange, no matter how unusual it may be. But you may be—will be—startled by some of the things I am about to say to you. If you feel that you can trust me in this matter, I must beg that you will ask no questions; desire no explanations; and that you will answer the questions I shall ask of you fully and freely."

Mr. Durand bowed gravely. "If I am to ask no questions, and as I do not in the least comprehend your meaning," he said, "I can only beg that you will proceed with whatever you have in hand, Mr. Bathurst."

"I will, sir," replied the detective, drawing up his chair. "My time is limited; I can waste none of it. First, then, how long since Miss Annin ceased to be an inmate of your house?"

"Miss Annin!" in marked surprise; "she left, let me see, nearly three months ago; before Aura went to New York."

"Miss Durand has visited New York, then?"

"Yes; she went with the Wendells; was gone some seven or eight weeks."

"Ah! And how long since Mrs. Durand's health became delicate?"

"Mrs. Durand? Let me see; she had a severe cold a week or more before Aura came back, and since then has not rallied as I could wish."

"No!" in a constrained voice; "Mr. Durand, you must take your wife away from the city immediately."

"Indeed! And why?"

"Because she will not live two months longer—with her present surroundings."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this: Your wife is being slowly poisoned!"

Mr. Durand's face became ghastly.

"You are mistaken," he said: "you must be; such a thing is simply impossible!"

"Listen, Mr. Durand. When you go from this place I want you to go straight to the doctor you consider most skilled, and ask him to analyze for you the contents of this phial," taking a small bottle from his pocket and holding it towards Mr. Durand. "Then I want you to take that man to see your wife, and ask for his candid judgment. When you have heard that, you will be more than ready to accept my advice. And then I shall have more to say to you."

"Where did you get that phial?" fairly gasped the old gentleman.

"I took it from the stand near your wife's couch the day I called upon her, sir. Will you have it examined?"

"Most certainly I will! It's past my comprehending. But I can't have any doubt about a matter like this; if it is as you say, where is the guilty one?"

"Leave the guilty one to me, sir. When I have convinced you of the truth concerning your wife, then we will talk about this other matter."

"You have convinced me that you harbour a grave suspicion, and a strange one, sir; and—I want to hear all that you have to say now," said Mr. Durand, with sudden resolution. "Tell me what you propose to do, and then I will go straight to a physician. By the way, how came you to suspect anything of this sort, and to steal my wife's medicine?"

"I borrowed your wife's medicine, Mr. Durand," answered the detective, with a grave smile; "and my eyes told me that Mrs. Durand's life was being tampered with. I have had considerable experience in poisoning cases, and I recognized the symptoms as described by Mrs. Durand."

"Good heavens! I shall take this immediately to Doctor Worthing."

"No! don't go to him, Mr. Durand," said the detective, gravely.

"Why not?" sharply.

"Because—that bottle has just returned from Doctor Worthing's hands."

"What!"

"I have had it examined by him; I would not put such a grave matter before you until I had made assurance doubly sure."

"And he said—what?"

"He said what I have told you, the bottle has been tampered with; it contains a strong mineral poison."

"My God! Bathurst, tell me what to do," cried the old man, despairingly.

"Will you act upon my advice?"

"Yes!—yes! without question; take

everything into your own hands, but tell me how to act. God of heaven, my wife might have died but for you!"

"True," rejoined Bathurst, gravely. "Listen, sir, and remember our compact; ask no unnecessary questions."

Neil Bathurst leaned nearer the old man, and for more than half an hour they conversed, the former speaking in grave, firm tones, and the latter uttering, for the most part, broken, horror-stricken ejaculations, and listening with a face that grew set and stern and almost vengeful before the discourse was done. At last the two men arose as if their conference were at an end.

"You understand me fully, do you not?" asked the detective, as he took up his hat and prepared to go.

"Yes; I understand, Bathurst, and have no fear. I shall do my part."

"Then I will say good-bye to you for the present. When we meet again I hope your house will have become a safe place for your wife—and yourself."

And so they parted to meet again after many days and under circumstances most strange and startling.

On leaving Mr. Durand, Neil Bathurst, still driving the light carriage, turned his horse's head towards a still more unfashionable quarter of the city. The streets were full of moving humanity, and his progress was, of necessity, slow. As he was picking his way along a somewhat narrow, although busy, street, his eye fell upon the form of a woman who was hurrying along not far in advance of him, and in another moment a well-known figure passed swiftly and evidently in pursuit; it was evident enough to the detective, at least, for the woman was the one who had been so nearly murdered after purloining his wallet from Jason Bradwardine, and the man was Bradwardine himself.

At that moment the woman turned into a still more obscure street, and like a flash the pursuer was upon her. She felt a hand close upon her arm like a vice, and, uttering a cry of terror, turned to face her enemy. Instantly her face blanched, and she made a desperate effort to elude his grasp, but it was quite hopeless—he held her with a clutch that caused her to writhe with pain; and the true spirit of the man shone in his eyes as he fixed them upon her, with a wolfish glare, and ejaculated:

"Curse you! you jade! I have caught you at last. What have you done with the papers you robbed me of, you white-faced thief?"

"I have not got them," faltered the woman; "I never saw them after that night."

"You lie! Will you give up those papers, or go to prison?"

"I tell you I have not got them; let me go," she cried.

"Not I! Come along, madam, we will see what a couple of policemen will do for you."

But the woman resisted, and with a brutal oath he raised his arm as if about to strike her. But the arm was arrested and a voice said in the villain's ear,

"Cur! Take your hands off that woman."

Jason Bradwardine turned swiftly and confronted a young man in the dress of a mechanic.

"Devil take you for a meddler!" he cried. "Mind your business! This woman is a thief. I am taking her to the police. Stand out of the way." Still keeping his fierce grip on the quivering arm.

"Let go that woman, I tell you!" commanded the mechanic, with an ominous flash of his grey eyes. "You are using unlawful violence."

For answer Jason Bradwardine lifted up his voice and bawled "A thief! a thief! Police! police!"

By this time a small throng had congregated about the three, and two policemen, who had been called by some on-looker, came tearing around the corner; at the same moment Neil Bathurst walked quietly into the small arena.

"What's the matter?" he said, addressing the woman.

"Oh, sir, help me. He is trying to arrest me," cried she, eagerly.

"Here, policemen, take this woman in charge; she has robbed me. She is a professional thief," said Jason Bradwardine, authoritatively. "I will go with you and enter my complaint."

The bold policemen stepped up to the woman and grasped her as if she had been a desperado of several tons fighting power, while the mechanic looked on, quivering with indignation and apparently at a loss how to act.

"Arrest this man, too, for assaulting me," said Bradwardine, who did not fail to note the fire in the young man's eye, and preferred keeping him at a safe distance until he could put himself out of harm's way.

The mechanic laughed scornfully.

"Perhaps you had better arrest me, too," said Neil Bathurst, turning to the policemen. "Officers, hands off that woman."

"Who the devil are you?" growled Jason Bradwardine, turning upon him fiercely.

"I'll attend to your case in a minute," retorted Neil; then turning again to the staring policemen, he said, with a significant brush of the sleeve, "Hands off, boys, or by heavens I'll knock you down first and have you discharged afterwards. I'll take care of this woman."

Something in his manner convinced the wiser of the two custodians that here was no mere meddler, and he asked, quite respectfully,

"Who are you, sir, and what authority have you to interfere?"

The detective leaned forward and whispered something in the man's ear. It was a very low whisper, but another ear, trained to catch the slightest sound, heard one word, "Bathurst."

The whisper had the desired effect. The man's arm dropped to his side and he turned to his companion.

"It's all right," he said; "let go the woman, or you will find yourself in hot water."

"Now, then," said Neil, turning upon Bradwardine and pointing in the direction he had come, "your way lies there; and if ever you attempt this dodge again it won't be well for you, Mr. Bradwardine."

At the mention of that name the villain started as if a ball had struck him, and the young mechanic's eyes glowed with a sudden light.

"Look here!" cried Bradwardine, recovering himself and turning to the officers; "that man is an accomplice: I swear it; he stands in with that woman who has robbed me."

"It don't make no difference what he is," said the second officer, who had just received a whispered communication from his comrade; "he has told you to move on, and my advice to you is, git!"

"And to make sure that he does move on, and don't turn back, gentlemen, won't you just escort him as far as the river?" said Bathurst, with a wink to the two men.

"We will that," said the man who had last spoken, touching his hat respectfully. "Move on ahead, mister, and, if you try any dodges, we'll try the 'stop thief' game on you."

And, with the cheerful alternatives of being made conspicuous by the escort of the two policemen, or, still worse, being chased through the streets for a thief, Mr. Jason Bradwardine was forced to content himself; and, with a farewell glare of rage, directed towards the woman and her two champions, he turned away.

"When you get that party safely at the river, just stop and refresh yourselves," said the mechanic, "pressing some money into the hand of the nearest policeman.

And then he turned towards Neil Bathurst.

That cool individual was conversing with the woman, who, in obedience to a sign from him, had stood passive, just where the officer had left her.

"Pardon me, sir; may I speak one word with you?" said the mechanic.

Bathurst turned; he was aware that Jason Bradwardine had been shadowed by some stranger, and he did not want this woman to be followed by any one. He felt assured that this was the man who, for some reason, was on Bradwardine's track. "I will be with you in a moment," he replied. Then he turned and exchanged a few hurried sentences with the woman, who soon set off, at a rapid pace, in the direction whence she had come. For a moment he gazed after her, and then turned towards the mechanic.

"Now I am at your service, sir," he said, courteously.

"Thank you. Then let us move on a little way," replied the young man, with a significant glance towards the people who still stood on either hand, gaping and wondering at the unexpected turn of affairs. They walked away and turned into the broader street, where Neil had left his horse.

"Now, then," said Neil, "can I be of any service to you, sir?"

"I believe that you can, Mr. Bathurst; at least, you can give me your hand," said his companion, with a smile that lighted up his whole face.

Neil started at hearing his name upon the lips of this stranger.

"Whom do I address?" he asked. "You seem to know me, sir."

"And yet I never saw you until this lucky moment. But my ears are very acute,—and I have heard of Bathurst, the detective. I am Francis Ferrars."

"What! Ferrars, the English detective?" cried Neil, his whole face beaming with surprise and pleasure.

"The same."

Impulsively Neil extended both hands, which were grasped by the Englishman and warmly shaken. "Jump into my buggy, Mr. Ferrars," he cried; "you must give me a little of your company now, and command me when you want assistance."

"Thanks; I accept gladly. I want both your society and your assistance *now*."

"And I want to introduce you to a brother detective, who would rather shake your hand than that of the President."

"Indeed! who?" springing lightly into the little carriage.

"My best friend, Rob Jocelyn."

"What! Big Jocelyn, the counterfeiters' enemy?"

"The same."

"Then I am, indeed, fortunate. I am already repaid for coming to America."

Neil laughed. "I think, by-the-bye, that you two have met," he said.

"How is that?"

"If I am not mistaken, Rob and you are shadowing the same game."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BROTHER DETECTIVES.

FRANCIS FERRARS turned towards his companion a face of grave inquiry.

"Do you mean the man you have just thwarted so cleverly?" he asked.

"I mean that man."

"Then I was right in making myself known to you. If I am a judge, you are no friend to him."

"I am no friend to any dastard," replied Neil Bathurst, gravely.

"Oh! I see you know him in his true character."

"I shall know more of his true character within the next forty-eight hours," said Neil, grimly "I have drawn you off his trail, Mr. Ferrars; not intentionally, however. I can perhaps assist you; at least I can promise that he won't escape you for a little time."

"I have followed him from England, Mr. Bathurst; but he is only a means towards an end. I hope, through him, to find others."

Neil Bathurst uttered a low, musical whistle. Then he turned towards his companion.

"We must confer together," he said, gravely. "I think we can help each other. Will you go with me to my quarters, where we can talk freely?"

"That is what I wish," replied Francis Ferrars. "I scarcely hoped to meet with two such allies as one might have in yourself and Big Jocelyn. And, if I have not misunderstood you, we are all in pursuit of the same man."

"And if I have not misunderstood you, we have another interest in common," rejoined Bathurst.

"Another!"

"Yes. You say this man is only a means towards an end. You are seeking others through him."

"True."

"Am I mistaken in thinking that your search is for a woman, or two women?"

Francis Ferrars turned upon his companion a searching look.

"Is it possible that you know the object of my search?" he asked.

Bathurst laughed lightly.

"Things come about strangely," he said. "I know so much about Bradwardine and his iniquities that I am able to give a pretty shrewed guess. I may be mistaken, of course. I know the object of his present sojourn in America. I don't know what crimes he may have committed in his mother country."

"You know why he is here now?"

"I do."

"Then you know why I am here."

"Is it a woman, then?"

"Yes—or, two women."

"Then, Mr. Ferrars you and I must understand each other. I, too, am in pursuit of this woman."

As he said these words Neil Bathurst drew up his horse before a large feed stable. "I will leave my horse here," he said. "We have only a few steps further now. My rooms are in the next block."

They sprang from the carriage, and leaving it in the care of an attendant, turned their steps toward Bathurst's rooms.

"Jocelyn will be with us soon, if he is not already here," he said, as they approached his door. "He has a pass key."

As they entered the room the odour of a powerful cigar greeted them, and two long legs let themselves deliberately down from the back of a chair.

"Why the deuce don't you stay away altogether?" began Rob; and then, seeing a stranger behind his tardy comrade, he brought himself to a standing position, and the remainder of his growl was never uttered.

"Don't grumble, old man," said Neil, laughing. "I am prepared to make amends for all your waiting. I have had an adventure, as young ladies say, and as a result I can introduce this gentleman, first of our brotherhood, Mr. Francis Ferrars."

Rob sprang forward looking almost incredulous.

"What!" he cried. "Not *the* Ferrars."

"Yes, *the* Ferrars," replied Neil, while Ferrars laughed outright, and extended his hand.

"You need not be so much astonished," said Neil, when Rob had satisfied himself as to the identity of Ferrars. "You and Mr. Ferrars have met several times."

Both men turned astonished faces towards him.

"How do you figure that?" asked Jocelyn.

"Easily. I have your word and his, for it. Didn't you drive a Dutch pedlar from the depôt recently, and didn't he request you to follow Mr. Brady's carriage?"

A light began to dawn upon the countenance of Ferrars.

"Was it you who drove me that day?" he asked, turning to Rob.

"Were you the Dutchman?" asked Rob in his turn. "Well, this is getting too deep for me!"

"We are in deep water all around," said Neil. "Let's sit down, as comfortably as we can, and begin at the beginning. First, I'll relate how I fell in with Mr. Ferrars."

They drew their chairs about a small table, upon which the host placed wine and some prime cigars, and then he told of his encounter with Bradwardine, and its results.

"And now," he said, with a significant glance at Rob, "Mr. Ferrars tells me that he followed this rascal from England, hoping through him to obtain a clue to a woman or two women, perhaps; and I have jumped to the conclusion that he may be in search of the very girl who dodged me so cleverly a few days ago."

"I don't quite see the probability of such a supposition," said Mr. Ferrars, removing his cigar from between his lips. "However, I intend to trust you with my story, gentlemen, relying upon you as brother detectives; and, as it dates a long way back, it is in order to tell it before I ask from you the questions that," with a smile, "I intend to ask."

"And that will be answered to the extent of our knowledge," said Rob Jocelyn warmly.

"Thanks," said Francis Ferrars, and then, putting aside his cigar, he began his story, omitting nothing, save the names of his employer and of the mother and child.

"You see, gentlemen," he concluded, "I have good cause for following this man. I have no positive proof that he knows where this woman and the child, that must now be a young lady, may be found; but I have been his shadow for more than a month, and I believe that he holds a clue, at least, to their whereabouts."

Neither Neil Bathurst nor Rob Jocelyn spoke; they were looking at each other with troubled faces.

"My story has a strange effect upon you gentlemen," said Ferrars, taking up his cigar and coolly relighting it. "Do you think my chances for finding this fugitive heiress so utterly hopeless?"

"No," answered Bathurst, seriously; "you may find her to-morrow, but—I fear you will be doomed to disappointment. You may never be permitted to remove this girl to England."

"Not permitted! and why?"

"Because, as a detective, it is my duty to arrest her for a grave crime."

"What! a crime! what crime?"

"She is accused of having murdered her husband on her wedding night."

Francis Ferrars gazed at him in speechless amazement.

"Listen," said Neil. "Like you, I will begin at the very beginning; at the very day when Rob Jocelyn arrived in this city, and this girl, who called herself Lenore Armyn, also arrived, from the little town of Fairlie."

"Then she *has* lived in Fairlie?"

"Yes, and her mother is buried there," replied Neil. Then he began, giving minutest incidents as they came. He told how he had met Jocelyn, and how he had left Clarence Arteveldt, sending by him an excuse for not appearing at the Ruthvens. Next, how he had blundered upon Rob, disguised and lying in wait for a man whom he had known for a rascal in London. He told how they had separated, Rob following the man, whom they afterwards found to be Jason Bradwardine, and himself strolling away at random, to come unexpectedly upon the woman, who had left Bradwardine only to encounter the assassin's knife. Then he described the scene in the disreputable house; told of the finding of the wallet, and how by investigating its contents they had assured themselves that this man, "Brady" as he called himself—Bradwardine, as they believed him to be—was bent on mischief.

"I will show you this wallet," Neil said, when he had reached this point in his review, "but I don't think you will need its testimony before you become convinced that Lenore Armyn Arteveldt is the child who stands between Bradwardine and his fortune. We knew that the man had an evil motive, and your revelation has told us what the motive was. But to proceed."

He refreshed himself from his wine glass, and then went on with his recital, telling next how Bradwardine had advertised for a female detective, and how he, Neil, had presented himself in answer; how since, as Mrs. O'Neil, he had kept the woman who had stolen the wallet from falling into Bradwardine's hands, at the same time deluding him with the belief that a vigorous search for her was being prosecuted.

"I may as well state, just here, that I had befriended the woman, partly from pity, and partly because I believed that, sooner or later, such a woman could be of service to me. I have kept posted concerning her ever since, and when she left the hospital assisted her to find a safe and quiet place, where she could remain and await further developments. I was on my way to see her to-day, having found a use for her, when we encountered Bradwardine, and it was she whom the villain was trying to arrest, when you and I, Ferrars, met so opportunely."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Rob, "how things do come about! Where did you leave off, Neil?"

"I left off where you may begin," replied Neil, taking up a cigar and preparing to light it. "Please relate your experience while tracking Bradwardine and his game from Elm Valley to Fairlie."

"That does come next," said Rob, reflectively; and then, in his quaint, graphic way, he described his journey to Elm Valley, to look up facts concerning "Madam Bourne," and his subsequent pursuit of Bradwardine to Fairlie, together with the discoveries he had made there. Here he paused, and Ferrars broke in with more excitement than he had hitherto manifested:

"I am thoroughly convinced already that this girl, this Lenore Armyn, is none other than the heiress of whom I am in search. The description of the mother, of the girl herself, every detail concerning them, goes to prove it in my eyes. Continue, Brother Detective; what transpired after you had discovered these things at Fairlie, while playing the part of census taker?"

"What next occurred I must tell," said Bathurst; "and now comes the darkest part of this strange complication."

Beginning with the morning when Rob Jocelyn left him to start unexpectedly in pursuit of Bradwardine, Neil detailed the conversation between himself and Rob, when he had told him how, because of going to shadow counterfeiters at "Mike's," he had missed the wedding of Clarence Arteveldt and Lenore Armyn. Then he related how he had been summoned to the house of his murdered friend; described the scenes enacted there on the wedding night; the anathema and flight of Lenore; the after tragedy, the accusation against the fugitive bride, the testimony against her, and how, in his pursuit of her, he had visited Fairlie, and learned, to his unbounded astonishment, that Lenore Armyn and the mysterious daughter of the still more mysterious Madam Bourne were one and the same. Finally, he related his experience as a medical student; his discovery and sudden flitting to the city; his visit to the asylum, and the manner in which he supposed the girl had escaped him.

"And for the remainder," he concluded, "we may as well compare notes."

They were silent for a time, and then Francis Ferrars said, turning with a slight smile towards Neil,

"And so you were the medical student?"

"Yes, and 'Bless my heart,' as Doctor Austin would say, why, you were Peterkin the pedlar. Well! you sold me!"

"I believe I did sell you some small articles," replied Ferrars, demurely. "So that is what took you off in such a hurry! And it must have been the news of the flight from the asylum that brought the good doctor to town a few days later. I will tell you how we came, as that is next in order."

And he speedily related how he had delivered the doctor's message to the stage driver; and how the doctor, Jason Bradwardine, and himself disguised as Peterkin, came to the city.

"And then you all went to the asylum in a string like children playing crack the whip," finished off Rob. "And I was your Jehu, Ferrars."

"Yes," laughed Ferrars, "and I thought you about the stupidest Yankee I had ever seen."

"Well! we all took each other in at any rate," said Bathurst. "Now, for the next link. Rob, who had again got his eye on Bradwardine, kept it on him, and I turned my attention to another little matter that may or may not develop into something that will put another face on this affair of the murder. So while Rob and you, Ferrars, followed Bradwardine to the dive theatre, and then assisted him to escort two ladies home, I was, to all appearances, out of the ring. Now, Ferrars, give us your version of that theatre business."

"My version is brief," said Ferrars. "I believed that Bradwardine had some sort of a clue to the girl's hiding place, and I could do no better just then than keep him in sight. When he followed those women home from the dive I did not feel at all sure that they were the parties I wanted to find, so I went back at the heels of my man; this morning he went to that same house, and remained nearly two hours, and then he repaired to a little restaurant, or *café*, near the river, where he was met by a tall woman dressed in black; these two conferred for half an hour, and then he went home and dined."

At the mention of the tall woman in black Rob Jocelyn's eyes began to twinkle, and when Ferrars ceased to speak he burst into a perfect roar of laughter, greatly to the astonishment of the dignified Englishman.

"Now, Rob," said Bathurst, with a mirthful look in his eyes, "sober up and tell your experience." Thus adjured, Rob "sobered up," and said,

"That won't take long. Of course I didn't follow in the wake of that grand rascal very long without discovering that some one else was up to the same dodge, and I wasted a little time trying to figure out who it could be. Then I made up my mind that I had better let Bradwardine go, and 'haunt' the house where the two women stopped, for a while. You see I knew that Bradwardine had seen the girl Lenore Armyn, and I never had, no more than Neil there. So I took it for granted that this was the right party, and hung around the house half the night. Well, it isn't a particularly large house, and before I struck out for these quarters I had satisfied myself that the girl was not in it. She had left by some rear entrance. Having settled this in my mind I explored a little, and found that there was a sort of alley or court leading through to the next street. Well, I came here and met Neil, about three o'clock this morning, and after a brief consultation and a couple of hours' sleep I went back to my post, and remained there until noon, or a little after, when this young man came along and ordered me to 'pull off.' As you have said, I had witnessed the visit of Bradwardine to the house, which I learned belonged to a certain Mrs. Harris, ballet mistress; and I had also satisfied myself that the girl was not in that house." Here he leaned back in his chair and looked across at Neil. "Now, old man, furnish the wind-up. Why did you call me off this afternoon? and who looks after Bradwardine while we consult?" he said.

"I'll tell you in a very few words," said Neil, soberly. "Just after you, Rob, had left this morning, I, as the widow O'Neil, received a note from Jason Bradwardine, asking me to meet him without fail at a certain *café* near the river at twelve o'clock sharp; he 'needed my help in a delicate matter,' he said. Well, I met him promptly, and the tall lady in black, Mr. Ferrars, was none other than your humble servant. Mr. Bradwardine there unfolded to me a grand scheme, or the outlines of one; he will have possession of this girl to-morrow, and I am to assist him in taking care of her. This is why I called you off, Rob, and this is why I say that Jason Bradwardine may be trusted to look after himself for a little while."

For a long time they sat in silence, and then Francis Ferrars, who had been thinking busily, looked up.

"You expect, then, to have this girl virtually in your power by to-morrow at this hour?" he asked of Bathurst.

"Yes."

"And — shall you arrest her immediately?"

"That," said Neil, "is what we must now discuss."

"You tell me that the strongest evidence against her is circumstantial, Mr. Bathurst. Do you believe in her guilt?"

"That is a hard question to answer; the thing that tells most against her, in my estimation, is the fact of her running away from me when I went to the Asylum, and —she must have had a strong motive for remaining concealed before she would go to that ballet mistress for protection."

"True," said Ferrars, gloomily. "If you arrest her, then my search is ended; if she were proved ever so innocent, upon trial, it would never do to take back to that proud old nobleman an heiress who had been tried for her life."

"True enough," broke in great-hearted Rob Jocelyn. "By heavens, the girl has been terribly wronged; either one of us if he had a sister who had been so shamefully coerced into marrying a man she despised, would have walked up and shot the fellow in broad daylight, and been applauded for doing it. There's only one thing I can't understand; if the girl had the courage to denounce him, so openly why did she not kill him on the spot if she wanted his life?"

"That is an argument that has more than once occurred to me," said Neil. "I see how you look upon this matter, Ferrars, and it's the right thing too. If this girl is innocent, then by publicly arresting her we will do her an irreparable wrong, and will make your mission worse than fruitless. The case against her looks very dark. But —I have got in my hands a clue, a very slight one, but enough to indicate the possibility of a different climax to this affair; a climax that would utterly shatter the evidence against this accused one. Now, it will not do to let the girl escape again, and —I want to see through Bradwardine's game. I have something to tell you now that I think will startle you both a little. I want you to join with me in working out this business; there is more than work enough for us all, and it will require our combined wit to carry it to a successful termination. What say you, shall we combine ourselves for the work?"

"Yes," said Ferrars, promptly, extending his hand.

"Yes," said Jocelyn. "Count on us, and I believe this is about the first detective's league ever instituted."

"Then listen," said Neil Bathurst. "I am going to leave this business in the hands of you two, and—I'm going to take a journey."

"To take a journey?" said Ferrars and Jocelyn, in the same breath. "Now?"

"Yes, now; at least, as soon as I have fulfilled my engagement with Bradwardine. We must know his game, now or never; and here is another reason why we should let him fancy the girl in his power—I think he means foul play. Now, Mr. Ferrars, it is always necessary to have a place where people who are working together, yet apart, as we must, can meet at times, with perfect freedom. Rob has a key to these rooms, you must have another; and listen while I tell you why I must leave the city." They drew nearer each other and listened, with faces expressive of wonder, incredulity, and horror, to a startling disclosure from the lips of Neil Bathurst.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN THE TIGER'S CLAWS.

JASON BRADWARDINE'S scheme had been, apparently, a complete success. Lenore Armyn and Mrs. Harris had taken up their abode under the roof of that sister mentioned by Senor Castro, and all was going smoothly. The house occupied by these four was situated in a lonely quarter of the town, at the very foot of a street that, as Mrs. Harris knew, bore anything but an enviable reputation; but much of this lady's life had been passed in questionable localities; and, as they were not to remain there long, it was hardly worth while to trouble Lenore by repeating "legends of the streets;" besides, Senor Castro, being a stranger, could, of course, know nothing of this. So Mrs. Harris gave herself no trouble about the street. The house was certainly an improvement, in the matter of comfort and elegance, upon her own, and she need take no thought for to-morrow.

This house, as we have said, stood at the foot of the street, and very near the river. It was a large house, with some pretensions to elegance, and Mr. Bradwardine had taken it ready furnished. The first great step was taken; Lenore Armyn was in his house; but Mr. Bradwardine was becoming impatient.

On the morning of the second day Mrs. O'Neil left the house to visit that quarter of the city where the woman who had been rescued from Bradwardine's clutches had been seen by him. She was to remain there all day. Mr. Bradwardine fancied that he knew the exact block that the woman had found refuge in, and Mrs. O'Neil must make a thorough search before she returned.

Before Mrs. O'Neil departed upon this mission she did a queer thing, if any one had been near to see it. But she chose her time with a view to solitude, so no one knew that she made a careful examination of all the locks and bolts upon all of the doors, from that opening upon the street, straight up to the rooms overlooking the river, that had been assigned to Lenore Armyn. It is hardly to be supposed that Mrs. O'Neil feared that burglars would visit the house in broad daylight; but, whatever she feared, or thought, she certainly examined the fastenings.

She had not been gone half an hour when Senor Castro begged for a few words with Mrs. Harris. He had just received a message from two young ladies living in the suburbs, he told her; they were very eager to go to Cuba with his company; now, he could make room for one or two more, if they were prepossessing; but he disliked very much to be obliged to interview so many applicants, and—another thing, these ladies had been recommended by a friend whom he really did not wish to offend. Would Mrs. Harris help him out of the difficulty? If she would go and see these ladies he could rely upon her judgment; if she engaged them, he would know they would satisfy; and if she declined to engage them, his friend could hardly be offended with him.

In short, Mrs. Harris was flattered into a very complacent mood, and the remark that she must go in good style and, as her trunks had not come—Mrs. Harris had excused the one valise that held all she possessed of wardrobe, by saying that she had sent her trunk on ahead by an expressman, and by fidgeting, whenever she thought of it, because her "trunks did not come." No one believed in the trunks, of course, not even Lenore; but when Senor Castro remarked that, as her trunks had not yet come, she must draw on him, to procure whatever she needed—only he would wish her to go right away; she could go straight down town, get what she required, then take a carriage and drive straight out to see these ladies—her last scruple was overcome.

In a very short time, with a little roll of

bills in her pocket, and exultation in her heart, Mrs. Harris was speeding towards the State Street dry goods marts, and Lenore Armyn was alone with her enemy.

Mrs. Harris of course had acquainted her with the interview that had transpired between herself and the "Senor," but she had not stated that Mrs. O'Neil had gone out some time before; in fact, and to do her justice, she hardly thought of it. And Lenore was quite unaware that she was alone with "the Cuban," as she called Bradwardine. Not that this knowledge would have disturbed her particularly; she was, as we know, no coward, and she had no suspicion that "the Cuban" was other than he seemed.

She was sitting before a comfortable fire, holding a book in her hand, but letting her thoughts wander far from the pages, when a tap sounded on her door, and without turning her head, she bade the knocker enter; no one came to her room save Mrs. Harris and sometimes the "Senor's" sister; probably this was the sister.

The visitor entered promptly, closing and locking the door, as he did so. At the sound of the key in the lock, the girl turned her head. It was Senor Castro who had entered, locking the door behind him; and he now seated himself opposite Lenore, and directly between her and the windows facing the street. There was no fear in the girl's heart, only indignation, as she arose, saying sternly,

"Senor Castro, you have locked that door and taken the key; be good enough to replace it immediately, and to leave my room."

The man laughed scornfully. "I am not Senor Castro," he said, "that is only a pleasant fiction. Don't trouble yourself to be dramatic, keep that for the stage of the Havana Theatre—when you get there."

Lenore sat suddenly down in her chair. It was all over, she thought; she had been trapped, and now she was to be arrested for Clarence Arteveldt's murder. Well, she would show no cowardly fear. She had done her best to escape and had failed; after all, what matter, since she must be either captured or hunted. She felt strong with the courage of desperation; she stared at her captor so calmly, so persistently, that he began to wonder ot her coolness.

"Well," he said, finally, "you seem resigned."

No answer; she took up her book with perfect outward coolness. It was the man's turn to stare. "Miss Voss," he cried, "do you realize your situation?"

"Senor Castro," she retorted, scornfully, "I think that I do."

"What! You know that your life is in my hands."

"Not at all," she replied; "only my liberty."

"Your liberty! Ha! ha! So you think I intend to make you a prisoner. Undeceive yourself; I am no gaoler."

"Then I suppose you are worse."

"Whatever I am, we must cease parleying. Do you know how long you have to live?"

Lenore began to suspect that she was in the presence of a maniac. What could his words mean else?

"No," she said, simply to gain time; "do you?"

"Yes. You are to give me some information, then—you may die in any way you choose."

"You are exceedingly kind," she said, still to gain time. "As a rule, murderers spring upon their victims in the dark, take them unprepared. Why do you deviate from this rule?"

"Because I want to prepare you; you have got to answer some questions first," he replied, grimly.

Lenore now felt sure that the man was insane; or else, he might be playing a part; perhaps, after all, he was seeking to draw from her a confession. She began to feel almost angry; this man had entrapped her, and now he was trifling with her, seeking to test her courage?

Lenore had courage; courage that would have done credit to a strong man. She now resolved to settle for herself the doubt, to know whether she was dealing with a detective or a lunatic.

"Have the goodness to drop histrionics on your part," she said. "If you are an impostor, and not Senor Castro, what is your motive for assuming this part?"

"I have told you, my motive was—to get you in my power."

"Well! and what then?"

"And then—to put you out of my way."

"Out of your way?"—the lunatic theory began to gain ground.

"Yes," rising impatiently. "Come, you have asked questions enough. Are you prepared to tell me what I want to know?"

How cold and bad and cruel he looked. But he did not look as she imagined a lunatic might. If he were not an officer of justice, and not insane, what then could he be? A sudden thought flashed upon her, and into her heart came the first throb of actual fear.

"Who are you?" she cried suddenly, "and what do you want to know?"

He approached a step nearer.

"No matter who I am," he said; "I want to know who has charge of your mother's papers and letters. I want you to write that person, instructing him to put them all in my keeping."

Lenore Armyn drew a long, long, shuddering breath, and for a moment her face was corpse-like in its pallor. Step by step she recoiled from him, moving backwards until the wall stopped her further retreat; then she breathed almost in a whisper,

"*Ah!—I know you now.*"

"What! you know me? I hardly think it."

"Yes!" she cried, with sudden, unexpected fierceness; "I know you. Blind! blind that I have been, not to recognize your evil face; again and again it has been pictured to me; again and again I have been warned, implored, to fear, to dread, to shun you. Oh! I know you," her voice rising, her form growing firm and erect, and her fierce wrath driving fear out of her heart once more. "You traitor! you liar! you poisoner of my mother's whole life! I know you. Jason Bradwardine, and I hate you! I *hate* you! I HATE you!"

The villain stood astounded at her fierce energy, and before he could frame a reply she went on,

"It is you who have caged me like a rat in a trap, you against whom I have been so often warned; and I have been so blindly self-reliant, so certain that you were the least among the things I had to fear. Man, do you know what you have done? You have murdered my mother, as surely as if you had used the knife or poisoned bowl, and now I wish I could kill you. Ah!"—lifting her face, and throwing up her arms as if invoking a curse upon him—"for the first time I know what it is to feel like a murderess. If a wish could kill, you would lie dead at my feet."

With a low, blood-curdling laugh he moved again towards her, and she now saw that he held in his hand a glittering pistol.

"You have not softened my heart towards you," he said, mockingly. "If you have done raving tell me what I want to know."

"No answer; her eyes were roving swiftly about the room.

"You need not try that," he went on; "I don't intend to shoot you, unless you make it necessary; but if you make any noise or try any tricks I am ready for you. Who has your mother's papers?"

"Do you think I will tell you?" she retorted, with blazing eyes. "I am quite at your mercy, Jason Bradwardine; if you have made up your mind to kill me you are wasting time."

"Will you give me an order to take charge of your mother's papers?"

"No! When I am dead my mother's papers will be returned to her relatives, and then they will know what you are. English justice will set aside an entail that would enrich such a villain as you, Jason Bradwardine. My mother's papers are safe from your hands."

The man uttered a fearful oath. "Curse you!" he cried. "What do you know of these things? Your mother's papers can't hurt me. I have a different reason for wanting them."

"Well! you can take my life, but you can't have my mother's papers," she replied, scornfully.

"But if I spare your life?"

"Bah! As if I would trust you."

"Will you give me those papers?"

"Will you take my parole of honour, and suffer me to go from this place and deliver to you the papers at a place I shall appoint?"

"No, by Satan, I will not!"

"I thought so. Well, you can't trust my honour, Mr. Bradwardine; I can't trust yours. That question is settled."

"And your last chance for life is settled with it."

"My life is not so very dear to me," she murmured; "but to die by such a hand; better the hangman."

The words were spoken half to herself, but he caught their meaning.

"You are ready to die?" he asked.

"Yes," without even glancing at him. "I am ready."

Jason Bradwardine hesitated. He had expected to frighten from Lenore what he so much desired to possess—certain papers that, if they came into the hands of Sir Hillary Massinger, would damage his cause materially. But he had commenced wrong. He had meant to kill her in the end, and had thought that the mere mention of possible death would draw from the girl the information he desired. He had not counted upon two things; first, the courage and shrewdness of the girl; and, second, her knowledge of him, and concerning the part he had played in her mother's life. He regretted now that he had not sprung upon the girl and buried a knife in her heart when she was unconscious of his presence. But he must kill her now—the necessity for her death had become doubled.

Lenore was still standing against the wall, and he, with pistol cocked and held in readiness in one hand, came still nearer her, and with the other hand slowly drew from his breast a glittering knife. Involuntarily she shrank back, and then forcing her voice to calmness, she extended her hand towards the knife.

"Give it to me," she said. "I would rather die by my own hand than by yours."

How the black eyes glittered as he drew back his hand.

"I told you I would let you choose," he said, with a sardonic smile. "You may die by your own hand, but not by the knife. I can give you poison."

Even then, face to face with death, she could sneer at his cowardice. "Oh!" she said, "you are afraid to put a knife in the hands of a weak girl. You poor coward!"

He muttered some fearful oaths once more, and then said, savagely, "Once for all, will you have the poison or be stabbed?"

"Give me the poison," she said. "I will not die by the hand of a coward."

He took from his pocket a tiny phial, and tossed it towards her, saying:

"There, then. It is prussic acid."

It fell to the carpet just at her feet. She stooped swiftly and picked it up, then turned to him triumphantly.

"Now, hear me," she cried; "all your life long your nights will be haunted by my dead face. All your life will become a burden because of this day's work. If ever yet a spirit came back to earth, I will come back to you, and make your life too horrible to be borne. I mean it! And you might have escaped all this, you might have delivered me up to justice, for know that I stand accused of murder; you might have placed me in the felon's cell—perhaps on the scaffold—and have consoled yourself with the thought that you had done your duty; but now—now, my blood is on your head, as is my mother's also."

The first words of this speech had caused Bradwardine to wince and shudder. He was superstitious, as all cowards are; but the last words brought to his lips a derisive smile.

"You mistake," he said. "If a man commits murder in this country he is proven insane. But a young and beautiful woman like you—bah! the judge would shed tears over you, you would be brought out as an actress, and all the world would run to admire. I would not deliver you up to American justice if your crimes were tenfold-murder, for—I want you to die!"

"My crime was only this," she said, lifting the phial at the same moment, "to have been wronged, and to have fled from the man that wronged me. See! This is my last moment on earth. I have said my last words to you. All the days of your life you shall remember this deed; and remember this, too, I have not once asked for mercy at your hands; I despise you too utterly. You can cause my death, not my humiliation."

She withdrew her eyes from his face and turned them skyward.

"And now, God of Heaven, and all the white-souled angels, hear me (with my last breath) swear that no drop of Clarence Arteveldt's blood reddens my hands! that I am innocent! and may God forgive me for what I am about to do."

She bowed her head and lifted the phial to her lips.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BAFFLED.

A CRASH, a blow, a bound, and the sound of shivering glass. Then everything was changed.

Lenore Armyn stood, with startled eyes, gazing down at the deadly phial that lay crushed to atoms at her feet, while the sickening, pungent perfume of its spilled contents pervaded the room.

Jason Bradwardine, still grasping the glittering knife, lay measuring his length in the furthest corner, and, midway between the two, with flashing eyes, and her right hand coolly aiming a pistol at the breast of the prostrate villain, stood—the widow O'Neil. The door stood wide open, and one glance showed the lock hanging, broken and loose. It had been filed through so skilfully that one push would force it from its fastening, and yet no eye could have detected the work.

"Lie there, you dog!" said the widow O'Neil, in a voice that made the villain stare, and that caused Lenore to utter an exclamation of astonishment. "Don't attempt to move, or by heavens I'll put a ball through you;" then, without once taking her eye from the prostrate man, she said to Lenore, "Madam, yonder lies the pistol that I caused this cur to drop. Can you pick it up and put it out of his reach?"

Mechanically Lenore obeyed. She could not yet fully realize the change that had come about; a moment before face to face with death; now—was she not to die after all? She moved as far away from the

prostrate, would-be assassin as she could, holding the pistol in her hand.

Jason Bradwardine raised himself on an elbow, and glared like a basilisk at this unexpected and unwelcome apparition.

"Who the foul fiend are you?" he fairly gasped, when the truth forced itself to be recognized, and he felt that this was the person he had believed to be a *bonâ fide* widow, and his ally.

"I am one who has been on your track longer than you can guess, Jason Bradwardine. I know you better than you know yourself. You will find I am not the sort of woman you can trifle with," said the widow, in a very manly voice. "So this lady is in your way, is she? Well, I will take her out of your way, and to give you a chance for reflection I will make sure that you don't leave these premises. No, don't move; I have not much patience—and just drop that knife from your hand. What, you won't? Come here, Miss Armyn."

Lenore came forward. She had quite recovered her presence of mind by this time.

"Can you shoot?" asked this strange woman, with the man's voice.

"Yes," replied Lenore, promptly. "And my hand is steady, see!" She held out a firm little hand, on which the widow cast an admiring glance.

"Step over to that table, please; there! Now cock Mr. Bradwardine's pistol—it's a nice little weapon—now then, aim it straight at his temple. I am going to take that knife from him, and bind him hand and foot. If he offers to resist, shoot him instantly."

"I will," said Lenore, firmly; then, as a mocking light came to her eyes, "Mr. Bradwardine, don't tempt me. I *want* to shoot you."

Jason Bradwardine groaned and cursed; he dared not struggle, he feared that shining weapon, now that it was in Lenore Armyn's hand, more, far more, than he had feared the one aimed at his heart by the false widow. He fully believed that she wanted but a hint at resistance to speed a ball to his brain.

The widow threw off her shawl, drew a coil of stout cord from her pocket, and bent over the prostrate man.

"Nice knife, too!" said she, cheerfully. "Cut well, I should think. Don't roll your eyes so, my man. You didn't think this of the widow O'Neil, did you? There now, just give us that other hand. I must tie them behind you. There, that's done; that's better than any true love knot, sir. Now for the feet. There, now, Mr. Bradwardine, you are tied fine and fast. If Mrs. Harris should not come back, I don't know what would become of you. You can call, of course, but you know this is rather a dull locality; you didn't want to be where help could be easily summoned, and you must be satisfied with your own arrangements."

With these consoling remarks sounding in his ears, and with Lenore Armyn's eye, and weapon, turned upon him relentlessly, Mr. Bradwardine submitted to be bound hand and foot, the widow emphasizing every knot she tied with one of her cheerful comments.

"Now then, Miss Armyn," said this individual, "you and I will not intrude upon Mr. Bradwardine any longer; I have just a word for his ears, meanwhile you had better get your hat and be ready for departure;" then turning again to the bound and baffled man, "I suppose you wonder why I don't arrest you? Well, I will explain; there are others more interested in you than I am, and I leave you to them; you are sure to come to grief, and if you want to hasten proceedings against you, just try the dodge you did two days ago on B—— street. You need not trouble that woman about your wallet. If you really feel the need of it, ask *me* where it is. As for this lady, approach her again at your peril. And now, if you have no other business to transact with the aid of 'dear Mrs. O'Neil' she will bid you good day."

For answer, Jason Bradwardine gnashed his teeth, and growled out a curse; and Lenore's rescuer turned towards her, never once looking towards the bound villain again.

"Miss Armyn," said the champion, "have you been at all injured by this brute?"

"No, sir," replied Lenore, ignoring the attire of her new friend; I think, after all, the man was half afraid of me."

"Quite likely, he is certainly a pitiful coward; and yet—you had the poison at your lips, Miss Armyn."

She turned suddenly. "How do you know my name?" she asked.

"Just as I know his name—you do not wish to have me call you Mrs. ——"

See put up her hands suddenly. "No! No one shall call me that," she said, and then became silent.

"We will take these," picking up Bradwardine's knife and the pistol which Lenore had laid down. "Are you ready now, Miss Armyn?"

"Yes, quite ready."

They went out and down the stairs in

silence. At the door Lenore paused, and turned towards her companion.

"Sir," she said, "you have saved my life to-day, and, I thank you—words are feeble to express what I would say. To have died thus in the presence of that man would have been inexpressibly terrible, although I do not think I fear death. Will you answer me just one question?"

"If I can, Miss Armyn."

"You are disguised as a woman, and I have thought you a woman,—of course I know better now. Are you not Mr. Bathurst, the detective?"

"Yes, Miss Armyn, I am Bathurst the detective, but I am anxious to serve you, nevertheless," replied the disguised Neil.

"Thank you, and I must believe you," she replied; then she stood still, apparently thinking. "Am I to go with you?" she asked, suddenly.

"Yes, Miss Armyn, it will be best. I have something to say to you. I have a carriage two blocks away. You see, I was prepared for the emergency," with a short laugh. "Do you feel like walking to the carriage. Has this—excitement unnerved you?"

"I feel—a little unnerved—yes," replied Lenore, with a sudden droop of the eyelids. "The reaction, I suppose—however, I can walk—to the carriage."

"Take my arm, Miss Armyn," said Bathurst, with genuine solicitude; "it has been a trying time for you."

"Yes," replied Lenore, quite feebly, and leaning heavily upon the proffered arm; "it is over now."

They reached the carriage, and Bathurst gave an order Lenore could not understand, then they took their seats and were driven rapidly away.

Lenore leaned back wearily. "I feel—strangely," she said, in a low tone.

"I will get you a glass of wine, Miss Armyn," and he was about to stop the carriage.

"No! Please don't, Mr. Bathurst—I shall feel better presently."

"I will let in some cool air, then," said Neil, at the same time lowering the window nearest her.

"Thank you."

They whirled on, across a bridge, and from street to street, turning occasionally; they were now in the heart of the city, and were compelled, by the press of vehicles, to move slowly. As Lenore leaned back, glancing from time to time listlessly out of the carriage window, they crossed a street which she recognized with a shudder. Then a sudden light came to her eyes. Again she lowered her lashes, and leaned wearily back. A moment after she caught, through the half-closed lids, the glow of green, and red, and yellow colour, and then she turned towards Neil Bathurst.

"I feel—ill!" she gasped—"water." And then she fell heavily forward.

In an instant he raised the drooping form and laid it gently back upon the cushions. Then he called to the driver, almost forgetting to assume his feminine accents,

"Stop at that drug store opposite. Drive up close."

This was done, and before the driver could descend from his perch, Neil was out on the pavement.

"You need not get down," he said, not wishing to cause any unnecessary questioning. "I will be back in a moment." And with a ladylike shake of his sable drapery he entered the drug store. Very soon he returned, bearing in his hand a glass of rich, red wine—and followed by a clerk, who carried sal volatile and other restoratives. He put his foot upon the carriage-step and glanced in; then started back, with an exclamation of amazement and sudden anger. The carriage was empty.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I DON'T BELIEVE SHE DID IT."

Two hours later Francis Ferrars was sitting in the room that, by common consent, had become a rendezvous for the three detectives. He had left Rob Jocelyn two hours before, engaged in a losing game of poker with that limb of the newspaper fraternity, Mr. George Fordham, who seemed equally at home with the cards or the quill; and had betaken himself to these rooms, which Bathurst declared had now become common property, to reflect, and to take a second and more thorough review of the wallet of Jason Bradwardine, and all the memoranda collected by Jocelyn and Bathurst, concerning this man, and the hunted Lenore Armyn. They had all been placed in his possession by the two detectives, and they were now spread over the table before him.

"It certainly looks dark," he muttered, after perusing the last scrap of Bathurst's jottings, "and yet—the girl comes of a brave, high-souled race; I don't think that one sinister drop ever yet flowed in their veins; and if this girl has struck an enemy in the dark she must be indeed degenerate I don't believe it, I can't; although the

provocation was great. But, guilty of this crime, or innocent, she has something which she wishes to conceal. Before this mockery of marriage, and this murder transpired, the girl had a mystery. In that I fully agree with Bathurst—but, in spite of this mass of evidence, I do not believe that she murdered her husband."

He arose, paced the room for a few moments, and then began slowly to gather up the papers. While he was thus engaged, a key turned in the door, and he lifted his head to see Neil Bathurst in his feminine disguise enter the room. Neil closed the door behind him with great deliberation, and then crossing the room, flung himself down in a big chair and began, slowly and with great apparent care, to remove his female habiliments. First of all, the tight-fitting morocco boots, with their excruciating high heels; next the widow's bonnet and cap; following this, cuffs, collar and accompanying adornments; and all the time dead silence between the two.

Francis Ferrars calmly continued his work of gathering up the papers, and scarcely glanced at his silent disrobing process.

Finally Neil looked up, with one hand clutching at the wig which Rob had denominated "sorrel," and said, in a voice of deepest solemnity,

"Ferrars, I've been done!"

Ferrars looked at him inquiringly, but said nothing.

"I've been done," pursued Neil. "And by that wisp of a girl."

"What! Lenore Armyn?"

"Yes; Lenore Armyn," grabbing off the wig, and flinging it spitefully across the room.

Ferrars sat down and looked at him gravely.

"Do you mean that she has escaped?" he asked, slowly.

"That's just what I mean! She played me the neatest trick; by Jove!" his face breaking into a smile, "I can't help but admire the girl."

Ferrars smiled too at this outburst. "And Bradwardine, what of him?" he asked.

"Oh, he's safe enough, but probably not very comfortable," with a short laugh. "I'll tell you all about it in a jiffy."

At this moment there came a vigorous thump on the door, and then Rob Jocelyn's voice was heard outside.

"Let a fellow in," he said, with a second thump.

Ferrars arose and quietly drew back the bolts, and instantly Rob bounced into their presence.

"Hallo! widow," he exclaimed, "is your *matinée* out?"

"Yes, it's out," retorted Neil, grimly; "and now I am going to tell Ferrars all about it. You are just in time. Sit down there and listen, and don't you put in your oar until I am done. If you do——" He finished his sentence, or left it unfinished, with a menacing gesture; and Rob dropped obediently into a chair near Ferrars, at the same time bestowing upon Neil a comical grimace.

"Blaze away, widow," he said, with absurd gravity, "I'm dumb."

Neil threw himself back in his chair, elevated his feet, and began.

"Well, I have already told you all that I know concerning the roping in of the girl through the agency of that avaricious old ballet mistress. She was duly installed in that rookery that can scarcely ever find a tenant, because of its beastly reputation, and things went on swimmingly. While he, Bradwardine, went to fetch the girl, I of course remained in the house to receive them. Well, I put in the time while I was left alone, and by the time they arrived had filed through half a dozen locks and bolts so that they would not hold against a stiff pressure. So far, good. Of course, Mr. B. was supposed to confide in me; he wanted us out of the way, myself and the Harris. He devised a nice little plan for both of us: sending me to look after the woman, Ellen Richards, down near the street where we rescued her from his clutches, Ferrars; and then he sent Harris on a fool's errand after some ballet girls, who were supposed to live away out in the suburbs. Well, when I had seen Harris safely out of the way, for she left the house last, I came quietly back. As I had expected, the street door was double locked; I forced this open easily, and crept upstairs and into my own room. Presently I heard my man come along the hall and knock at Miss Armyn's door; then he entered the room, and I opened my door in time to hear him turn the key in the lock, thus, as he supposed, locking himself in with the girl. Well, I was not slow in getting near that door, and I could hear every word. I might have interfered sooner than I did, but, upon my soul, I almost forgot myself in listening to that girl. She is braver than a young lioness."

He paused for a moment, and then went on with his recital; giving the strange interview between Lenore and the villain Bradwardine, almost word for word, while his listeners became more eager and excited as the recital approached the climax.

"I shall never forget my first sight of

Lenore Armyn," Neil said, when he had reached the point where he had burst in the door. "Standing, as she supposed, on the brink of eternity, with the poison at her very lips, her face was as fearless, as calm, and earnest as the face of the bravest man that ever confronted death; and it looked as pure and truthful as the face of the Madonna. Just how I struck that phial from her hand and felled Bradwardine, I can never tell you; I don't know myself. I was bursting with wrath against the one and admiration for the other. Well, I didn't allow Mr. Bradwardine to get up any more. After the first start and tremor the girl seemed perfectly self-possessed, and when I asked her to keep Mr. B. quiet with his own pistol, she held out her little hand to show me how steady it was, and then told him, with such a dangerous look in her eyes, that he had better not tempt her by any movement; and he did not. By my soul! I believe he was more afraid of her than of me! Well, I made him fast, and then we started out. As we went down she seemed to begin to feel a reaction from the excitement that had kept her so strong. I was not surprised at this; any other woman would have fainted a dozen times. We drove away, however, in a carriage I had stationed near the house when I started out in the morning, and she seemed to be all done out. I began to feel terribly sorry for her. We crossed the river and came down on the South Side, then we turned and came into Randolph Street; well, here we had to move slowly. Pretty soon the girl raised her head from the cushions and tried to say something, and then she fell over in a faint. Now, I did not want to raise a fuss, and I did not want every one to see her, so I stopped the carriage just in front of a drug store that we were passing. I got out, telling the driver not to get down, and went in for restoratives——. Well, when I came out with my smelling salts and wine, my lady was gone."

"Gone!"

"Gone!"

"Yes. Gone! vanished! skipped! dodged me as skilfully as an old cracksman. By the powers, gentlemen, I could not comprehend it!"

"And had no one seen her go?" asked Ferrars.

"Not a soul; the streets were thronged, and nobody observes anybody in such a crowd. The driver sat like a dummy, looking straight before him; he had not heard her get out. He was worse than a wooden man. Everything was against me; my disguise most of all. I dismissed the carriage, and beat about as well as I could; I went to the hack stand, but no one had taken a carriage for the last half-hour. Well, it's no use telling you *how* I tried to find some trace of her; I did not find it," and Neil arose and began to remove the paint and false eyebrows from his face.

Rob Jocelyn sat staring with owl-like solemnity for a few moments, and then he broke out into a perfect shout of laughter. Even Francis Ferrars could scarcely repress a smile.

"Didn't I tell you women were the devil?" gasped Rob, between his bursts of merriment. "I say, Neil, you have seen Miss Armyn, anyhow; now then for your theory; what did her face tell you?"

"Several things," replied Bathurst, his sunny nature beginning to assert itself; "but it did not tell me she was going to run away again, Rob."

"Seriously, Bathurst," said Francis Ferrars, "I fear that it was solely on my account that you treated this girl too much like a guest, and too little like a prisoner. And you let that man Bradwardine escape too."

Bathurst sat down again opposite Ferrars, and leaned towards him.

"Look here, Ferrars," he said, slowly, "if any one save you and Rob were told that I let this supposed murderess escape me, because I was too soft-hearted to put her under arrest, as it would seem that I should have done, they would set me down for a fool. But I tell you, in spite of the fact of her escape from me—I don't believe she killed Clarence Arteveldt. She must be found, but she shall not be arrested, until I have a reason for reversing my present opinion. I believe that I know why she deceived me, and thus made her escape, but never mind that. As for Jason Bradwardine, you must remember that the girl had told him of the accusation against her. Now, if I had sent him to the lock-up, he would have justified, or tried to justify himself, by saying that the girl was a murderess; then the hue and cry would have been raised in earnest. I have left him free, or within the reach of freedom, and now he will hardly dare approach the authorities on the subject. However, it's perilous to the girl either way; if he can find her, he will kill her if he can; if we put him in limbo, he might make trouble for her, that would be almost as bad as death itself."

"And you don't believe that she committed the deed?" asked Rob, in surprise.

"No. Nor would you if you had heard her declare, as I did, in what she believed to be her death hour, that she was

innocent. But I have other reasons for my belief, reasons that I shall not mention now."

"And—what will be your next step?" asked Ferrars, who had been watching Neil's face closely.

"Nothing — concerning Miss Armyn, except turn her over to you."

"To me?"

"Yes—if you can find her."

"Thank you—I *will* find her," replied Ferrars, resolutely.

"Well! I must turn my thoughts to other things. No use for me to look for her, she would vanish from before my very eyes."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Rob Jocelyn, "it takes the women to outwit us. Now there's my murderess, and there's the young lady with the opal set,—well! it's a queer world."

"Yes, it's a queer world," assented Neil Bathurst. "And now, Ferrars, consider the finding of Lenore Armyn your affair. But, when you find her, in heaven's name keep her. Is this my packet of papers?" laying his hand upon the bundle just collected by Ferrars.

"Yes," replied the English detective, "but—if you don't object, I will keep them for a little while longer."

"Oh, certainly. Ferrars, I wish I could help you in this matter, but, to tell the truth, my head is full of another thing, and it is something that requires instant attention. We shall be divided in work for a little time."

"True," responded Ferrars; "why, man, I don't need your help to find a girl who must be in the city. I should be able to find her, and then be ready to help you."

"You had better be ready to help me, and that soon," broke in Rob Jocelyn; "I shall need a 'pal.' I'm going into the burglary business."

His two hearers laughed, and then, having prepared himself for a fashionable call, Bathurst said: "Well, I am compelled to leave you now: wish me good luck, gentlemen."

"Where now, Neil?" asked Rob.

"To pay my addresses to Miss Aura Durand," replied Neil, and before Rob could utter a comment he was gone.

In a few moments Rob, too, took his departure, and then Francis Ferrars seated himself at the table, reopened Neil's packet of memoranda, and for more than an hour sat studying, making pencil notes, and thinking. Suddenly he lifted his head and sat looking straight before him.

"I have found it," he said, aloud. "Improbable as it looks, I believe she is there. I believe I can find Lenore Armyn."

Rapidly he gathered up the papers, donned hat and coat, and hurried out upon the street. He went straight to the place where Lenore had escaped Bathurst, and crossing over to the opposite side, walked two or three times round the square which enclosed that block.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN HEIRESS DEPOSED.

A WEEK had passed since the deliverance of Lenore Armyn from the hands of Jason Bradwardine, and her subsequent flight from Neil Bathurst. A week had elapsed since the conference of the three detectives; and since that day not one of them had seen or heard aught of the other two. It has been a week, too, since Mr. Durand, accompanied by his invalid wife and a faithful servant, left the city. He had been suddenly called away on business, and he had insisted upon taking Mrs. Durand with him, arguing that the change of climate would benefit her, as he was going South. Mrs. Durand had been her own housekeeper, and she had taken their best servant with her; but, fortunately, Mr. Durand had been able to procure the services of a widow, who could not only act as housekeeper, but as *chaperone* and companion to Miss Aura, who was thus rendered free from all responsibility, while virtually mistress of the mansion.

It was a dreary, rainy morning, and Aura Durand sat in her dressing-room, partaking of breakfast and thinking upon some disagreeable subject, if one might judge from the expression of her countenance. Her reverie was interrupted, however, and the current of her thoughts turned into a new channel, by the entrance of a servant, bearing upon a salver several letters and billets.

Miss Durand took them up, one after the other, and glanced at the superscriptions. Then she uttered a little triumphant coo, and hurriedly opened one of the letters. It read as follows, and speaks for itself:

"MISS AURA DURAND: *Kind Friend*—How grateful I should be that I am permitted to call you thus. Your delicious little note—quite too brief—is at hand, and I thank you for thus remembering and fulfilling your promise to send me a sample of your late companion's handwriting. In

response to your plea, that I will not use your hastily spoken words, or this writing, to the injury of Miss A——, I will only say that your will is my law.

"I am surprised to hear of your father's absence from the city; how much alone you must feel. I cannot tell when I shall return to C——, but rest assured that before I visit any other friends I shall come to you.—Yours sincerely,

"N. A. BATHURST."

"Really," said Miss Durand, pursing up her lips, "this is better than I expected. He will come to me first. Ah! Neil Bathurst, when I have won you, you shall aid me to crush mine enemy!"

And, smiling triumphantly, she took a sip of chocolate, and then turned, still smiling, to peruse the other letters.

"*Sweet Friend*—You are not neighbourly; you are changed. This must not be. I need your charming society. I shall go shopping to-morrow; will you make it convenient to call for me with your carriage, or shall I come around to the mansion?

"I have a ticket for the Tip Top Club masquerade, thanks to my late intimacy with you. I wish to go; we will go together, I think. To-morrow we will consult as to costumes.—Yours till death,

"NINA."

This was the next letter, and Miss Durand threw it upon the floor and trampled it under her small feet.

"Insolent!" she hissed. "Fool, fool! she is going too far. What does she think I am made of? Oh, for the day when I shall see her ruined utterly!"

With this un-Christian aspiration upon her lips, she paced up and down the dining-room; and where, a short time before, a smile of triumph had rested, there now sat a look of fear and hatred.

Finally she threw herself down in the dressing-chair once more, looking calmer, but very determined, and took up the next letter. It was from Mr. Durand, the first she had received since their departure. And this is what it contained:

"ST. LOUIS, ————.

"DEAR CHILD:—We are here safe and very comfortable, and you will be very glad to know that your mother's health is improving wonderfully. We shall remain here some time longer; just how long I can't say. And now comes a matter which it grieves me to write upon, yet it must be done.

Here Aura started and looked around involuntarily.

"I had hoped and expected never to be under the necessity of saying what I am about to say. I have never told you much of my family history, only that I stood quite alone in the world, as also did my wife, except that we have each other. Now, however, I must tell you that I had a brother, who, many years ago, became alienated from his family and friends. One by one the rest passed away, and my father's large fortune came into my hands. But yesterday, among the letters forwarded to me, came one from this brother's only son. My brother is dead, and he has recommended his son to my care. He is a young man, just of age, he informs me, and is my next of kin, and lawful heir of my wealth, morally as well as legally. I am bound to promote the interests of this young man.

"When I adopted you it was with the belief that I could one day make you my heiress. But this cannot be now. I shall make my will, settling upon you a comfortable income; the rest must go to my brother's son. This, of course, will not affect you as it would have done were you a young man. Probably it will not be long before you make a good marriage, and then your income will become your marriage portion. While we live you will have every want supplied as heretofore, and—who knows—when you have seen this new nephew of mine, which will be soon, you may find in him what Miss Annin used to call poor, unfortunate Arteveldt, 'a man to adore.'

"But my letter grows long and there is more to say. My nephew writes that he will arrive in the city on Friday. His letter has been unaccountably delayed, and this letter will barely reach you before that day. Of course he will make my house his home in the future, and you will be his little entertainer until we return. Please see that Mrs. Richards prepares him the best room, and as he is a stranger in the city there will be much that you can show him.

"I would hasten my return on his account, but that is quite impossible, so I leave my new found heir in your hands. I write him a letter by this same mail, which Mrs. Richards will deliver to him when he comes. I trust when I return to find you two on the most cousinly terms, and now I will say no more. We send you the best we have to send, our united regard.—Yours,

JAMES L. DURAND.

"P.S.—My nephew's name is Charles Durand."

This was the letter, the perusal of which left Aura Durand sitting pale as a corpse and motionless as a statue. A long, long time she sat thus, the letter fallen at her feet, her small hands clenched, her lips tightly compressed, and her eyes fixed in a glassy stare at vacancy. Minute after minute passed away, until a full half-hour had gone by, and yet the girl never moved. What finally aroused her was the silver chime of a little bronze clock just opposite. She started, seeming to listen mechanically, and then she sprang up and did what Nina Annin had once seen her do. She crossed over to a dressing-case, opened a drawer, took out a small phial, lifted it to her lips, and then, replacing it carefully, turned away, looking like her own calm self once more. She went back to the table then, picked up the letter and reperused its contents.

"Friday," she said; "why to-day is Friday, and Mr. Charles Durand is about to arrive. The genius of my fate is certainly growing fickle. Let me see. I am no longer a prospective heiress, and Charles Durand supplants me. So be it! But—the race is only begun."

And Miss Durand turned away from the table and touched the bell. Then she gathered up her letters and put them carefully away; all but the letter from Nina Annin. This she rolled into a ball, which she flung into the grate. It fell, not among the coals, however, but just short of the flame, finding lodgment among the ashes. In a moment her maid responded to her ring, and then Miss Durand said:

"Laura, go and ask Mrs. Richards if she is at leisure to come up here just now. And as soon as she leaves me do you come up and dress me for the morning."

Laura vanished, and in a few moments a soft rap sounded upon the door.

"Come in," said Miss Durand, in a silvery, child-like tone, and promptly the door opened, and Mrs. Richards, the new duenna and housekeeper, glided in. Mrs. Richards was a handsome woman, despite her somewhat careworn look, and, strange as the fact may seem, notwithstanding her weeds and widow's cap, she looked wonderfully like the Ellen Richards who had been stabbed, in a certain disreputable house, some five months since.

"Be seated, Mrs. Richards," said Aura, looking up, with a bright smile, as her visitor entered.

Mrs. Richards sank down in a low chair close beside the grate, shivering as she did so.

"It is so chilly this morning; is not the wind dreary? and yet," bending nearer the grate, "it hardly allows the fire to burn."

"I am not at all sensitive to the cold," replied Aura, pleasantly. "I asked you to come up at this early hour, Mrs. Richards, to tell you that we are to have a visitor. Did papa write you?"

"Only that his nephew was coming, Miss Durand; he referred me to you for orders."

"And you know I don't give orders," smiled Aura. "My cousin arrives to-day, and papa wishes him especially honoured in this house; you and I must entertain him royally, Mrs. Richards. By the way, did not papa send a letter for cousin Charles?"

"Yes." Mrs. Richards drew still nearer the fire and held up her hands to catch the warmth. In so doing her handkerchief dropped from her fingers and fell inside the grate. She snatched it up with a quick exclamation, and when she put it in her pocket the roll of crumpled paper was no longer among the ashes.

"Papa said that he had sent such a letter, and that I had better deliver it. So if you will send it up by Laura——"

"I will bring it up," said Mrs. Richards, rising. "It is locked in my desk."

"And you will see that his rooms are in perfect order?"

"All the rooms here are that," replied Mrs. Richards, and then she took her departure.

"Dress me in my most becoming *négligé*," said Aura, when her maid reappeared. "Take especial pains, Laura. Did Mrs. Richards send up a letter by you?"

"No, miss," replied Laura, letting down the soft masses of blonde hair. "Mrs. Richards is in the guest chambers."

"Well, she will bring it presently," said Aura.

But Mrs. Richards entirely forgot to bring the letter.

CHAPTER XL.

GREEK MEETS GREEK.

In due time Mr. Charles Durand arrived at his uncle's mansion, and was received by Aura with the most charming cordiality. He was installed in the best and most commodious suite of rooms, and Mrs. Richards went about her duties with an air of dignity, and a new sense of importance, as if she were ministering to the wants of an angel, and was not unaware of the fact.

As for Charles Durand, he took things very calmly and quietly—in fact, calm and quiet seemed the normal condition of this fortunate young man. In appearance, he was not, as Aura remarked confidentially to herself, "much to speak of." He was a very pale young man, and a very languid young man. His hair was very light, worn rather long, and parted in the middle. He wore a pair of straggling, light, and long Dundreary whiskers, but his upper lip was smooth-shaven. He had the air of a student; and, as he informed Aura, was just out of college. His father, he said, had intended him for a lawyer—but he didn't know what he would do; shou'd put the matter to a vote when "Uncle James" came home. And then Aura had smiled strangely. The young man's admiration for Aura was unbounded. He seemed quite ready to fall down and become her slave.

It was the afternoon following that on which he had arrived at his uncle's door, and Mr. Durand and his fair "Cousin Aw-ra," as he rendered the pretty name, were seated by the library fire, cosily chatting. Rather, the lady sat and chatted; Mr. Charles Durand, who seemed quite ignorant of some of the proprieties, lounged and listened, and occasionally almost yawned in the face of his fair entertainer. It was the afternoon mentioned by Miss Annin, in her note, as favourable for shopping, and from time to time Aura glanced at her watch as if waiting the approach of some hour, or event. Presently the thing expected occurred; the footman entered the room and announced, "Miss Annin."

"Show her in," said Miss Durand, promptly. And in another moment Nina Annin, richly dressed, and smiling blandly, entered the room.

Aura Durand arose to welcome her with well-feigned cordiality; and, after one sharp glance of inquiry, not unmixed with derision, Miss Annin responded in kind. And then, "my friend Miss Annin," was introduced to "my Cousin Charles;" and cousin Charles arose to the occasion, and drawled out several original and interesting remarks about the weather, etc. After a little, Miss Annin turned to Aura.

"Ain't you going shopping with me, Aura dear?" she asked, reproachfully; "I am sure your cousin will excuse you."

"Of course I will," responded Charles, good-naturedly; "I wouldn't much mind going shopping myself, either."

"Would you really like to go, cousin? asked Aura, with a little malicious twinkle of her eye. "In that case I will go, of course."

"Then that is settled," said Nina Annin, composedly. "Mr. Durand, we are going to talk about dresses now."

The young man looked up in some alarm.

"Are you?" he said. "Then I will not be missed. Aura, I want to go and answer Uncle James' letter. You have made me forget all about it, and he said answer immediately." And Mr. Charles Durand arose slowly, stifled another yawn, and lounged out of the room.

"Good heavens! what manners!" ejaculated Nina Annin, looking after him. "Where did you pick him up, Aura?"

"I have not picked him up," retorted Miss Aura, with a marked change of tone. "He is papa's own nephew, and very wealthy."

"Oh! he's wealthy, is he? Well, he certainly needs some such redeeming qualification. But you should not so suddenly change your manner, my dear; suppose some one were to hear—from the next room, for instance?"

"Nobody can hear from the next room; the next room is locked."

Nevertheless she went over and flung wide the silken lined glass door between the two rooms, and then crossed to the outer door and tried it.

"Nobody ever goes in there," she said, coming back to the library. "It's papa's especial sanctum, and is always locked when he is away. Now, then," turning impatiently upon her visitor, "what do you want now? I am getting tired of this sort of thing."

"That's a pity—under the circumstances," retorted Miss Annin, serenely.

"Under the circumstances, it is," said Aura Durand, coming closer to Miss Annin. "The circumstances are a little in my favour at present."

"Are they?" with mocking incredulity.

"They are, indeed. I think I shall convince you that you had better not presume too much upon our past relations."

"Really! Perhaps you will favour me with your first argument?" mocked Miss Annin.

Aura Durand leaned towards her and whispered something in her ear, something that made her start and turn pale. Only for a moment, however, then she rallied, and gazed at Aura with a strange fixed look.

"You see, Miss Annin, that you are a little, a very little, in my power," said Aura Durand, triumphantly.

"I see," retorted Nina Annin, slowly, "that you have put a halter about your own neck."

Then she put her hand into her pocket, took from it a little purse, drew from

thence a piece of dark cloth, and held it before the eyes of Aura Durand.

"Do you see that?" she asked, sternly, "and do you know where I found it, and what it means?"

Aura gazed at the piece of cloth as if fascinated, and a hunted, baffled look came into her eyes.

"Don't waste your breath in bravado," continued Miss Annin, replacing the scrap in her little purse, and the purse in her pocket. "I can bring other proofs to bear out this one. Don't let us have any more nonsense, and, don't waste any more time; we are going shopping."

"I think you must be made," said Aura Durand, turning away from her, and speaking in a low but a distinct tone. "You certainly don't know what you are doing."

"Bah!" retorted Nina Annin, sinking down upon a divan. "Now then, about the masquerade, before that precious cousin of yours returns. By the way, how comes it that papa and mamma are gone?"

"They are gone on business of papa's," replied Aura, coldly. "I thought you were talking about the masquerade."

"So I will be, presently. How is your friend, the detective?"

Aura looked up in surprise. "It seems you keep thoroughly posted in regard to my movements," she said.

"Certainly. Why not? Have you any designs upon Mr. Bathurst?"

"Designs?"

"Yes, matrimonial of course, not deadly ones."

"Mr. Bathurst is my very good friend; don't trouble yourself about him."

"I won't. Do you intend to marry him—if you can?"

"If I can!"

"Well, you know some men are obtuse—suppose he, too, should see some new face that was just as pretty as yours; men are fickle!"

"You ought to know," dryly. "Why must you go to this masquerade?"

"I might say that was my affair, but I know you will sympathize with me when I tell you that I want to follow George Fordham," replied Miss Annin, coolly.

"I thought so," rising. "If we must go out together, I will ring for the carriage and go and dress. We can talk of costumes after."

"Quite a change in Miss Aura," murmured Miss Annin, when she was left alone. "I don't think we shall have so many airs in future."

At last Aura was equipped for her drive; Mr. Charles Durand came down, announcing that his letter was just finished; and the three drove away in the Durand carriage, looking as high-bred and harmonious a party as one could wish to see.

A little later Mrs. Richards tapped at the door of the room belonging to Miss Durand's maid, Laura. It was promptly opened and the housekeeper, with one hand wrapped in a handkerchief, and odorous of arnica, smiled down upon the weak, little maid.

"Laura," she said, "I want you to do me a favour; I have got rheumatism in my hand to-day, I am subject to it, and I want to send a letter away by the evening mail; won't you just come down to my room and write it for me? I know you must be a neat little penwoman. Come down, and then we will have a nice cosy tea together."

Laura hesitated a little, but she was not proof against the flattery of Mrs. Richards and the prospects of a cosy supper with her superior, and the result was a natural one—she went down to Mrs. Richards' pleasant, private sitting-room, and indited quite a long letter from that lady's dictation, addressed it to a far distant city, and left it in the hands of the friendly housekeeper.

"You must come down and sit with me oftener, Laura," said Mrs. Richards, when later they sat at tea together. "I didn't know you were such delightful company; you are really too refined and dainty to be a mere lady's-maid."

And Laura was immensely flattered, and mentally pronounced Mrs. Richards a very sensible woman.

Meantime Miss Annin and Aura drove from shop to shop, accompanied by the admiring and much impressed cousin Charles. As they were descending from the carriage, in front of one of the State Street dry goods palaces, three gentlemen came down the street together. Aura Durand nodded to one of these, but Nina Annin made a signal for him to approach. He dropped the arm of the taller of his two companions and stepped to the side of the lady, while Aura Durand and her cousin stood a little apart waiting.

"See, Ferrars," said the taller of the two gentlemen, who now waited for the third, "that girl who beckoned Fordham is the young lady of the 'Opals,' Miss Annin, and that other one must be Miss Durand—by Jove!"

He broke off with this sudden exclamation, and stood staring at Aura Durand and her companion by turns. But Mr. Ferrars scarcely heeded him; he was gazing fixedly at Nina Annin.

"Jocelyn," he said at last, "who is that girl, and where does she live?"

"Which?" withdrawing his eyes from the unconscious face of Miss Durand.

"The dark one, Fordham's friend."

"Why, I told you it's the girl who owns those opals, and she is the one who lives at that house."

"Oh, is she?" said Ferrars, carelessly, and then he added, *sotto voce*, as Fordham turned towards them, "this grows complicated."

At last the shopping expedition was over, and the carriage rolled towards Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house, where Miss Annin with her purchases desired to be set down. Suddenly Nina Annin uttered a sharp exclamation, and then, as suddenly, she subsided into silence, looking fixedly the while at Aura Durand, who, on her part, looked with profound surprise at the lady opposite her, and seemed utterly unconscious of any cause for this unexpected ejaculation, or of its meaning.

Miss Annin had put her hand to her pocket to find that her purse was gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

FOUND AT GENTLEMAN JEFF'S.

FRANCIS FRRRARS and Rob Jocelyn had met for the first time since the conference of the three detectives on the day of Lenore's second escape from Neil Bathurst, not half an hour previous to the encounter with Miss Annin, Aura, and "Cousin Charles" upon State Street.

Their meeting was in this wise: Rob Jocelyn had been "roping" George Fordham for the past week, almost to the exclusion of everything else, and the English detective had been, for reasons best known to himself, haunting the genteel gambling-houses for the same length of time. So it chanced that on this afternoon the three had met at a popular billiard hall; and Rob Jocelyn, who had entered the place in company with Fordham, hastened to inform that gentleman that "yonder was a green English swell, whom he," Rob, "had dropped to some time before, and won money from;" and soon the three were on the most amicable terms. Fordham was beginning to believe in the gullibility and the tendency to rascality that Rob professed, and they decided to "take the Englishman in."

The three had sallied out upon State Street, where they had encountered the shopping party, and after this meeting they sauntered on, discussing their plans for the evening. It was finally decided that they should pass it together in some one of the many agreeable ways of killing time that are known to gentlemen of the sporting fraternity, and then Mr. Fordham said,

"And now, gentlemen, I must leave you for a while; a reporter is not his own man. I must be at the office for the next three hours, after that I will join you at the place suggested; in the meantime," with a wink to Rob, "I leave you to take care of each other."

Rob returned the wink with interest, and shortly the two detectives found themselves alone.

"Well, this is rich," began Jocelyn, forthwith; "so you are sporting, Ferrars?"

"Doing a little in that line," responded the Englishman. "I say, Jocelyn, you will have to make my excuses to that fellow, and arrange for another meeting; I can't be with you to-night."

"Can't you?" said Rob, somewhat ruefully. "I say, you have not had the luck to find that Aladdin's lamp girl, have you?"

"I will tell you that to-morrow at this time," said Ferrars; "as you say, she is rather too much on the presto change order to allow a man to speak positively. I am going to try for her, as you Americans say, to-night."

"No! Well, you are on a slippery tack then. You must have a strong clue. How will you effect the capture?"

"By stratagem," said Ferrars, with a queer smile. "And now, like Mr. Fordham, I must leave you. I have hung on, only waiting to get a word with you. At what hour can you be at the rooms to-morrow?"

"Any time before dark."

"Say three o'clock."

"Done."

"Any news from Bathurst?"

"Have not heard from him," said Rob, with a peculiar smile.

"Ah!" said Ferrars, smiling in turn. "Well, adieu, my friend."

"Bye, bye." And so they separated.

Francis Ferrars had conceived a sudden liking for the promenade around the block where was located the drug store from before which Lenore Armyn had so mysteriously disappeared; at least he had been there every evening during the past week, and now, some three hours after he had separated from Jocelyn, he was there again, sauntering leisurely along, now on one side of the street now on the other and

frequently his eyes were lifted, for a single instant, to a certain window.

At about nine o'clock he entered the afore-mentioned drug-store, purchased some "brandy killers," and turned his face westward, crushing the seeds between his teeth as he went. Westward only as far as the corner, then north until he had reached the middle of the block; then he ascended some stone steps, pulled open a green leather covered door, up half the length of a broad flight of stairs, and then he paused before a second door; a strong door, battered and scarred, and having a little sliding panel that could only be moved from within. Here he rang a bell, and presently an eye peered through the small aperture, after which the door swung open and the English detective, bestowing a half-tipsy nod upon the coloured gentleman who admitted him, passed on up the stairs.

"'S, the fat man here yet?" asked Ferrars, speaking with an evident effort to keep his tongue from tripping.

"No, sir; not yet," replied the coloured gentleman.

"Strange," commented the visitor. "Goin' to come soon—goin' to play wi' me."

"All right, sir," replied the servant with a grin, and throwing open the door the detective was ushered into the gaming saloon of Gentleman Jeff.

There were few players in the saloon at that early hour, and the proprietor himself had not yet appeared. Nearly every night of the past week the detective had been there, losing money, drinking freely, and playing the part of a "bloody Englishman" to perfection; he had made the acquaintance of all the *attachés* of the place, and voted himself the fast friend of Gentleman Jeff.

He lounged about now, making remarks that were not particularly lucid, and finally he threw himself down upon a divan at the lower end of the room, muttering something about "waiting fer th' fat man," and here for some time he remained quiet, and to all appearances half asleep.

After a time Gentleman Jeff made his appearance, and some others dropped in. Whenever a new arrival entered the Englishman would rouse up, lift his head "to see if it were the fat man," and then subside again.

Near him was a door which opened into a sort of cloak or dressing room, and from this a door led into the long hall. The door or entrance to the salon was situated at the head of the stairs, and the second flight began almost where the first left off; that is to say, opposite the entrance door.

The servant who admitted visitors also officiated during the early hours of the evening, when the visitors came at rare intervals, as a drawer of corks. When not thus occupied his station was in the hall without, not far from the cloak room. Later, the servants, whose duty it was to serve wine and wait at supper, appeared; and then the usher confined his attentions to the constantly clanging bell.

Presently a party of gentlemen came in. They were evidently persons of some importance in the gambling world, for the master of the establishment summoned the dark servant and ordered him to open wine for them.

This was the opportunity for which the detective had waited. He arose and, unperceived, slipped into the dressing-room. Then with perfect silence and burglarious rapidity he opened the door leading into the hall, stepped out, closed it behind him, stole like a cat along the hallway, swiftly and silently ascended the stairs, and then paused to look about him. A moment's survey seemed to suffice; then he moved up the hall, and paused before the door opening into Gentleman Jeff's private apartments. There he paused, listened intently for a moment, and then producing from his pocket a pair of nippers, and inserting them in the lock, he turned the key. In another moment he stood in the splendid private den of the refined gambler.

Seated near a blazing fire that shone out through the great isinglass windows of a polished stove, which looked like a miniature cathedral, were two women; one, an elderly woman, was busy with some needlework; the other, who was young and very beautiful, was reading.

Upon hearing the entrance of the intruder both women looked up inquiringly, and for the first time Francis Ferrars saw the beautiful face of the girl who had so bewildered and baffled three keen detectives.

It was Lenore Armyn.

CHAPTER XLII.

FOUND ONCE MORE.

QUICKLY, but with a cool composure quite irresistible, the English detective closed the door and advanced towards the two.

"Good evening, ladies," he said, with the air of one addressing some acquaintance in the drawing-room of a mutual

friend. "May I have the pleasure of a few words with you, Miss Armyn?"

Lenore had risen to her feet, but the respectful attitude and address of the intruder disarmed her in a measure. His face, too, was so frank, and so earnest were the eyes gazing at her, with the sad, wistful expression that was sometimes seen on the face of Francis Ferrars, she never once thought of denying her identity, and after a prolonged look, straight into the eyes of her visitor, she bowed a silent assent, and then waited for him to explain himself.

"Miss Armyn," he began, still in the same earnest, almost pleading tone, "I have entered your presence by stratagem, because I knew I could gain a hearing in no other way; but I have come as your friend, as a friend who can and will serve you if you will let him. If you will let me speak, and will listen to what I shall say, I pledge you my word—the word of a man of honour—that I will let your wishes guide me when I am done. If you bid me go away and leave you I will obey, and no word of mine will ever betray you. May I go on?"

With her eyes still fixed upon his face, Lenore resumed her seat, and turning to the startled old lady, who was evidently gathering herself for some desperate effort, she said,

"This—gentleman is here now, we may as well listen to him. It can make matters no worse; pray do not call your son until we hear what he has to say."

Then turning to the detective, she said, with a touch of scorn in her voice, "May I ask who does me this honour?"

He smiled that rare half-sad smile of his, and then his eyes looked more grave and more wistful than before.

"You will know that when you have heard my story," he said. "May I sit, Miss Armyn?"

She bowed, and he drew forward a chair and seated himself opposite her. Then he drew from his pocket a packet of letters, and opening it, selected two or three, which he extended to Lenore. "Do you know who penned these?" he asked, almost reverently.

Lenore took the letters, and, glancing at the first one, uttered a low cry. They were the letters found in the wallet of Jason Bradwardine.

"Where did you get these?" she asked.

"They were taken from that prince of villains, Jason Bradwardine," he replied.

"Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"And you speak as if you were no friend to him."

"You are right; I am his bitter enemy." Then he put in her hand two photographs.

"My mother's picture," said Lenore, gazing sorrowfully at the one. "Were these with her letters?"

"They were with the letters. Miss Armyn, do you know the other face?"

Lenore bent over the picture and murmured, half to herself, "I have seen it—dreamed of it, long ago," then she looked up quickly, "is it my"——she broke off abruptly, and flushed painfully.

"It is your mother's husband—your father. You have seen him, Miss Armyn; but you were a very young child."

Lenore bent over the picture again. Her father—the father she had never heard of—of whom she knew nothing; she had recognized her mother's face, her mother's handwriting, and it never once occurred to her now to doubt the sincerity of the man before her. Soon she looked up with a flash of her olden imperiousness.

"Did you know my father?" she asked, "Can you tell me about him?"

The detective glanced at the woman sitting on the other side of the fire. Lenore interpreted the glance.

"Is your story anything that others ought not to hear?" she asked. "Is it anything," shuddering, "that must be kept a secret?"

"I think that all your friends should know what I am about to tell you," he replied, gravely.

"Then speak," said Lenore, with a breath of relief. "This good lady is a friend indeed."

"I am aware of that," replied he, bowing towards the silent old lady. "Then I shall begin at once, only prefacing my story by saying, that I shall make it as brief as possible. And," with a slight smile, "if I am not banished from your presence, I can enlarge upon it later."

At this moment there came a quick step along the hall, and then the door opened, and Gentleman Jeff appeared upon the threshold. His face became very dark as his eyes fell upon the intruder, but Francis Ferrars arose to his feet with perfect composure, and said,

"Come in, Jeff. And pray pardon the trick I have played you. Miss Armyn, is not this friend also entitled to your confidence?"

"He is, indeed!" said Lenore, warmly. "Come in, please, and hear what this gentleman is about to say."

Thus adjured and much wondering, Gentleman Jeff closed the door and came towards the group.

"I can't understand this," he said,

"Have you been shamming downstairs, sir?" to Ferrars.

"I have been shamming," replied Ferrars, quietly. "Listen, my friend, and you will know why."

The gambler seated himself with the puzzled look still on his face, and without pausing for further explanation, the detective spoke as follows:

"More than twenty years ago, the only son of a proud and arrogant English nobleman fell deeply in love with a young woman who was the daughter of an Italian lady of high family, who had made a misalliance, marrying a handsome young Frenchman, a son of the people. The marriage had been a happy one, but the parents had died within the same week of some malignant fever, leaving this daughter with a small but sufficient fortune, and otherwise at the mercy of the world. As I have before stated, she was loved by an Englishman of noble blood, and shortly after the death of her parents they were privately married; they lived in seclusion for more than a year, and were very happy; happier than ever when their child, a girl, was born. But presently there came a change. The father of the young husband knew nothing of this marriage; he believed his son to be travelling for pleasure, and had himself chosen a wife to bestow upon him when he should return. But one day there came an anonymous letter, telling him of his son's marriage, revealing the secluded home of the young pair, and bidding the father to go and see for himself. Now the young husband had trusted one person with the secret of his marriage, and even permitted this trusted one to visit his home and know his beautiful wife. This man betrayed his trust; step by step he wormed his way into the confidence of the young wife, and when one day the husband went from home, for a two days' absence, his plot was ripe for development. On that very day the father, blinded, mad with pride, anger and disappointment, came to the home where the young wife was alone. A terrible scene ensued, and it ended in the father's declaring that he would give his son his choice between them; if he returned to her then she might claim him and keep him; if he did not come back, she must abide by the consequences, the law should free his son. Well, he did not come back; through the treachery and deceit of the friend he had trusted, he was kept away, and then the schemer came with a false tale to the half distracted wife; her husband had abandoned her, had returned to his father; this and much more she was made to believe, and then her mother's fierce Italian blood asserted itself; she would take her child and go away; above all, she would live. The fiery old nobleman had made one mistake, the Church would not annul the marriage, neither would the State. She knew this, and she knew, too, that her infant daughter was heiress, after her father, to one of the oldest names and finest estates in England. Still trusting the false friend who had wrought all her misery, she left her home, and her friends lost all trace of her. A little more than a week after his departure from his happy home, the young husband, who had been decoyed away by a false report of his father's illness, returned; he found his home desolate, his wife and child gone. Then he returned to his father, accusing him as the author of all this misery, and the father, believing his visit to have been the sole cause of the flight of his son's wife, did not deny the charge; there were many angry words, and they separated without fully understanding the cause of the trouble. All that the wily false friend had done, the son believed the father guilty of. The bereaved and forsaken husband left his father's house never to return. He became reckless, and still the destroyer was on his track, urging him on, keeping him alienated from his father, who now longed for a reconciliation. After ten years he died, and the proud father was left childless. Then this old man married, married a young wife, who died within the year, and then—he was forced to see that his grand name and his ancestral halls must come into the hands of a distant relative, a man who came of a wicked and debased, as well as a very distant branch of the family, and who was hated by the old nobleman for many reasons. He had never dreamed of this man as a possible heir—but the man himself had schemed for years to this end. He was the same man who had played the Judas to the old man's son; the man who had made the mother a wanderer, the child homeless and nameless, driven the father to an untimely grave, and rendered the proud old man childless and desolate. When this man presented himself and his pretensions, the old lord swore that he should never inherit his acres. Then he sent for me, and for years I have searched over Europe to find his son's wife and child. Miss Armyn, that proud old nobleman was your father's father; that wronged wife was your mother; the villain who wrought this evil was Jason Bradwardine; and the long-sought heiress is yourself."

The three listeners sat with faces turned

towards him, silent and astonished, and the detective continued,—

"Jason Bradwardine saw but one straw in the way of his happiness. You know what that was, Miss Armyn?"

Lenore started as if from a dream.

"Yes," she said slowly. "It was my life, and I had been warned against him." Then suddenly: "Sir, who are you? I thought when you came that you were a detective."

"I am a detective, my lady. I am Francis Ferrars, of Scotland Yard."

Lenore's face became suddenly grave. "You have come on a fruitless mission," she said, gloomily. "I must live and die an outcast like my poor mother."

"You are wrong, Lady Lenore; you have strong allies. I know to what you allude, and I know that a week ago you fled from your best friend. The man who rescued you from Jason Bradwardine does not believe you guilty of any crime. He would have done for you what Gentleman Jeff has done: provided you with a safe shelter until the storm is past and the true criminal brought to light. Neil Bathurst, the detective, is your friend and not your enemy,"

Lenore turned her eyes upon him and asked, almost breathlessly,

"Is that the truth?—Do you believe in him?"

"Believe in him? Lady Lenore, he has held at arm's length that eager mother and keen lawyer, at the risk of all that a detective holds dear. He, aided by a friend, a grand fellow like himself, is at this moment busy ferreting out suspected parties in order to fasten the guilt where it properly belongs. Twice you have evaded him, and because of this another man would pronounce you guilty. But two hours after your escape from his carriage, half a block from this place, Neil Bathurst said to me, 'In spite of this seeming guilt, I believe her innocent, and she shall not be arrested while it is in my power to prevent it.'"

Lenore arose and stood before him. "Do you believe me innocent?" she asked.

"I do," solemnly.

"And—will others ever believe it?"

"I have crossed the ocean to find and save you," he replied; "and you have two strong champions in Neil Bathurst and Robert Jocelyn. Gentleman Jeff knows their reputations. Ask his opinion of your chances."

"I know their reputations, and I know yours," said the gambler. "Miss Armyn, you are safer than if protected by a standing army."

CHAPTER XLIII.

A STRANGE PROCEEDING.

AURA DURAND returned from the shopping expedition, feeling, for some reason, in low spirits. During dinner she seemed preoccupied, and soon after she excused herself, saying that shopping always wearied her, and retired to her room.

If she sought solitude, she was doomed to disappointment, for scarcely ten minutes after she had left the drawing-room Mrs. Richards, too, arose and walked leisurely up the stairs, stopping at Aura's door. She came to consult the young lady upon some unimportant household matter, but she remained long after the matter was disposed of, chatting pleasantly, and seeming not to observe that Miss Durand was yawning, and her eyes growing heavy with sleep.

Suddenly she looked narrowly at the girl, and then exclaimed with marked solicitude,

"My dear child, how heavy and dull your eyes look! Does your head ache?"

Aura, with seeming reluctance, confessed that it did; and remarked that she would ring for Laura, if Mrs. Richards would excuse her, and retire. Instantly Mrs. Richards was at the bell.

"How thoughtless I have been," she said, self-reproachfully, "to keep you up like this! Laura will put you to bed, and I shall bathe that poor head for you. Now don't object, it will be a pleasure to me, and I know I can relieve the pains. I am a strong magnetizer."

It was quite useless to object; Laura was summoned, and the disrobing process commenced. While Laura was brushing out her mistress's blonde hair, Mrs. Richards moved softly about, from the dressing-room to the bedside, and back again. On a tiny stand near the dainty bed stood a little ewer and a glass. As Mrs. Richards, in one of her silent marches to and fro, passed this stand, her hand hovered for an instant over the drinking glass, and when she turned away three tiny crystal drops were in the bottom of that glass.

At last Miss Durand was duly ensconced in the snowy bed.

"Now," said Mrs. Richards, "prepare to go to sleep. Do you feel in the least sleepy?"

Aura said that she did, thinking the while, with an inward laugh, of Nina Annin and her all-night vigil.

"You must have your drink, I see," said Mrs. Richards, touching the ewer. "Take a sip, then, and go to sleep."

She poured out the water, and Aura drank it obediently, and then closed her eyes as commanded.

To and fro, to and fro, moved the deft hands of Mrs. Richards, and presently Aura's breathing became slow and regular, her clasped hands relaxed themselves and fell apart; she was sleeping. Really sleeping. Mrs. Richards satisfied herself on this point, and then she turned away with a triumphant smile upon her lips.

"Go to bed, Laura," she said to the little maid. "Poor child, you look tired too; I will close Miss Aura's rooms; go to bed."

Laura obeyed quite willingly, and soon Mrs. Richards withdrew, leaving Aura Durand locked in a sleep from which she would not waken for hours. How fair she is as she lies there under the soft glare of the wax-lights! Aura never sleeps without lights, subdued lights, near her, and to-night Mrs. Richards has left a few wax tapers ablaze, not only in the bed-chamber but in the dressing-room and boudoir beyond. Moveless and still lies the fair sleeper.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, the little bronze clock in the dressing room tells off the seconds, the minutes, almost an hour. Then the door of the boudoir opens as if by the hand of a spirit. Softly, slowly, it swings inward, and then a figure glides in, the figure of a man, a man clad in a long, loose, grey garment, and with his face and head entirely hidden by a velvet mask, and close-fitting velvet skull-cap. He closes the door through which he came, and bolts it without making a sound; then he takes up one of the wax tapers, and, holding it in his hand, passes through the dressing-room and approaches the bedside. He holds the taper aloft then, and bends down, gazing steadfastly at the sleeper. Then he starts back as if astonished; but a moment later he bends still nearer, holding the taper so close that the blonde hair upon the pillow seems almost endangered. At last he seems satisfied with his scrutiny, and then he goes back to the boudoir, replaces the taper, and draws from a pocket of the loose grey garment a tiny lantern of the "bull's-eye" order; this he lights, and the beams that shoot out are strong and bright. Now he is ready for work. He moves without apparent effort, but as noiselessly as a shadow. He must be the very prince of burglars, this masked man.

First, he goes straight to the bedside again, he puts down the bull's-eye, and begins a search about the bed. He puts his arm under the pillow on which rests the head of the sleeper, and lifts it from the bed. Then, with the other hand, he explores. Several articles he takes from underneath the pillow, and then he replaces it and the sleeper's head very gently, and turns to the stand whereon he has placed the things just removed from their hiding-place.

He draws a chair towards him, this nonchalant burglar, places it before the stand, turns the light of the bull's-eye full upon himself, and sits calmly down to examine his booty, there by the very bedside. First, there is a case of jewels, diamonds, superb ones; great blue gleaming sapphires; emeralds, of course Aura Durand would have emeralds; and a necklet of wonderful great pearls, with a shimmering pinky radiance.

They are worthy the jewel-case of a crown princess, these gems, and the man seems to admire them as he holds them up to catch the light, one after another. The settings, too, are splendid, and most of them seem quite new. He gazes at them after having replaced them in their satin beds, and seems to ponder. Then he closes the case, places it upon the stand once more, and takes up the next article. It is a smaller case; opening it he beholds a beautiful diamond-studded watch, with its golden glittering chain. On the case of the watch is engraved the words: "Aura, from her father;" the burglar merely glances at this, and then closes the case and places it beside the jewels.

Then he takes up a tiny, elegantly-mounted pistol. It is loaded, ready for instant use. He turns his face towards the sleeper as he holds it; perchance he smiles behind his mask. Aura Durand is prepared to defend herself, it seems; but she is quite defenceless now. The man turns his face away at last, and bends over the gleaming little weapon, examining it closely. It is of foreign manufacture, this he sees at a glance; and his quick eye soon discovers the name of the maker engraven upon it in tiny lettering.

And now he does something strange, something unprecedented for a burglar; again he lifts the head of the sleeper, and carefully replaces jewels, watch, and pistol, just as he found them, retaining nothing save a tiny bunch of keys. Then, lantern in hand, he moves about the room, and from that to the next; he opens dressing-cases, drawers, receptacles of every sort; he searches for secret hiding-places, he inverts chairs, he searches their paddings, he feels about the cushions of divans and lounges, he overturns footstools, he peers behind pictures and hangings, he searches everywhere.

Finally, he pauses before a trunk that stands in the dressing-room, a lady's travelling trunk, huge enough for a Flora McFlimsy. It is locked; and now he glides back to the bedside, takes from the stand the bunch of keys, and in a moment is kneeling beside the trunk, trying the lock with key after key. At last he has the right one, and presently the trunk is open, and he is rapidly turning over and examining its contents. It has a great many compartments, after the fashion of ladies' trunks, and one after another he opens them. Then he lifts out a tray, and begins swiftly to remove the dresses and shawls, the furbelows and laces, the soft silks and dainty linen. And now the trunk is empty, or so it seems, and the burglar is bending over it running his hands along the sides and over the bottom. Presently he plunges his hand into his pocket and draws out a bundle, wrapped in soft flannel; this he unrolls, and then places upon the floor beside him some small and queer-looking steel instruments. One of these he takes in his hand, and half his body disappears within the trunk; then it emerges only to disappear again with another twisted bit of steel. When he again raises himself he holds in his hands not only the instruments of steel, but a flat morocco case and two flat packages. The bottom of the trunk, or what seemed to be the bottom, has parted in the centre, and underneath is a shallow space. It is a trunk such as has been used by smugglers. A trunk with a false bottom.

The burglar places the morocco case and the two packets in his bosom, and then, without replacing the contents of the trunk, or closing the hidden opening, he rises and gazes about him. His search is not yet ended. On the opposite side of the dressing-room is a door opening into a large closet. This falls next under his examination. The walls are hung with dresses, wraps, all the paraphernalia of a woman's toilet that ever yet hung on hooks. On the floor are several boxes and two trunks, somewhat smaller than the one without. The masked man examines all the dresses, especially the darker ones, and feels in all the pockets. Then he turns his attention to the trunks and boxes; they contain hats, boots, clothing, what not. The first trunk he finds is not locked; but the second and last to be examined resists his attempts to open it. Again he resorts to the bunch of keys, but they all fail him. He turns away from the trunk and seems to be at a loss. This is what he thinks as he stands there:

"I have searched these rooms, every nook and crevice of them; where is the key to this trunk?"

Some thought has occurred to him; he takes up the lantern and hurries back to the bed-chamber; he pauses at the bedside and bends over the sleeper. He pulls away the covering from about her shoulders and throat, and then he opens away from the white neck the robe that is scarce whiter, thereby exposing to view a slender gold chain; it is long, and worn loosely about the neck. He inserts one finger under this chain and draws it carefully upward. Ah, see! On the end of the chain are fastened two small keys. The man's eyes glitter as they fall upon them. With deft fingers he removes them from the chain, and then he glides back to the closet and again bends over the trunk. The key fits—the trunk is open. As before, everything is removed; but not with so much care, for this receptacle contains discarded clothing, fragments of everything that women accumulate, and all crowded in in a hasty manner; at the bottom of this trunk there lies a small black valise, this the man lifts out quickly and glances at critically; then to its lock he applies the second key. Again he is successful; the valise springs open, and the man, with eager hands, removes the contents. It is a dark-looking bundle; he unrolls it, glances just once at something inside, and is scarcely able to suppress a sharp exclamation. Then he rolls up the bundle quickly, shudderingly; hurriedly replaces it in the black valise, and then, leaving the contents of the trunk strewn all about, leaving the closet open and the boudoir door ajar, he glides, valise in hand, from the rooms. Five, ten, twenty, thirty minutes are ticked off by the little clock, and then this strangest of all strange burglars returns, comes softly in, bringing back the black valise. He replaces it just as he found it, having first locked it; then he restores to their original places every article removed from the closet, trunks and boxes; pausing at times to assure himself that he is making no mistake. Next he restores to order the great trunk in the dressing-room; first, replacing what appears to be the three packets taken from thence, and closing the aperture in the false bottom. He works carefully, methodically, making no mistakes. When this last trunk is closed and locked he goes once more to the bedside, puts the keys again under the pillow, and the two detached ones once more upon the chain suspended about the neck of the sleeper.

Then he turns about and surveys the room, to assure himself that everything is just as when he first entered; he moves a chair a little, shakes out the folds of a curtain, surveys in the same manner the dressing-room and boudoir, and then, like a shadow, he steals away, closing the doors behind, and re-enters no more.

Still the wax tapers shed their mellow light; still the little bronze clock ticks off the moments, and still Aura Durand slumbers on, with calm upturned face and regular breathing. Truly Mrs. Richards it a wonderful magnetizer. It is grey dawn before the sleeper wakens, which she does with a start and a sudden exclamation. She sits up, looking about her in bewilderment, then she springs suddenly from her bed and runs to the dressing-room. The little clock tells her it is near morning; she goes to the window then, and peers out through the blinds. Yes, day is breaking; but how grey it is.

"Can it be possible?" mutters the girl. "Did I allow that woman to put me to sleep, and have I slept all night like this?" Suddenly she darts to the bed and lifts the pillow.

"Ah, they are there," she says, drawing a breath of relief. "I put them there, just as I did all the rest, for effect, and I did sleep after all. The day had been trying, but I did not know that I needed sleep so much. Nothing is disturbed; they left all the candles burning, I suppose, thinking that I should waken soon."

She puts her hand to her throat, and draws forth the chain with its pendent keys.

"So far I am safe," she mutters, "and I will make assurance doubly sure, even now."

Then she begins a hurried toilet. Not a dainty morning *négligé*, she arrays herself in a plain dark dress, such as society never saw upon the form of Aura Durand; she wraps about her a grey travelling shawl, and over her hat she ties a thick dark veil. Then she goes again to the closet; opens it, pulls from about her neck the slender chain and unlocks a trunk; hurriedly, carelessly, she pulls out one thing after another, and finally she draws forth the black valise. In another moment the candles are extinguished, the trunk is refilled and closed, and Aura Durand glides from her room, locks the door carefully behind her, and cautiously, silently, passes through the broad hall, down the stairs, and finally pauses at the street door. Carefully she draws back the bolts, and lets down the chain, then, with the black valise tightly clutched in her small hand, she hurries out, down the stately steps, and away.

It is not yet fairly daybreak, the streets are silent, deserted; she glides swiftly on, and out from somewhere glides an almost imperceptible grey shadow that follows, seeming hardly to be a human thing in that grey morning mist. On she goes upon her strange errand, and on glides the shadow. She has been moving nearer and nearer to the lake; on to where a dark pier is dimly outlined through the gloom. She glides out upon this pier, out, until she stands at the end; then she bends forward, swings the black valise to and fro, and suddenly lets go her hold upon it; the swaying impulse given it sends it out over the water, and then it falls, and, with a dull splash, disappears from sight, several feet from the pier. For a moment she gazes at the place where it went down, as if half expecting to see it reappear; then she turns and swiftly retraces her steps. And still the grey shadow is behind her.

CHAPTER XLIV.

BRADWARDINE AGAIN.

WHAT had become of Jason Bradwardine? We must now look after him, and gather up a few threads that belong to our fabric.

When Mrs. Harris returned from her fruitless errand to the two young ladies, who only existed in the brain of the ingenious Mr. Bradwardine, she came filled with wrath, despite the "extenuating circumstances" of new hat and shawl and the carriage. She rang the bell furiously, and when, after waiting a little time, no one responded, she gave the door a vigorous shake; to her surprise, she found that it opened, and then Mrs. Harris bounced in. The first thing to meet her eye was a letter, which lay upon the floor, directly at the foot of the stairs; a letter which Neil Bathurst had let fall, unperceived by Lenore, when they left the house. The ballet mistress picked it up; it was addressed to herself, and she opened it hurriedly, her eyes dilating with astonishment as she read these lines:

"MADAM,—The man who has called himself Senor Castro is an impostor and a criminal. He brought yourself and your young charge here in order to gain the opportunity to murder the latter; this he will attempt during your absence. If, when you return, you find both missing, know that he has accomplished his object. If he

is here, then he has failed. Be warned against in any way aiding or sheltering this man, otherwise you will involve yourself in difficulties and dangers.—A DETECTIVE."

Mrs. Harris was thoroughly astonished. She gazed about her for a moment, and then started up the stairs, calling, as she went, the assumed name of Lenore. From above a voice answered; it was a man's voice, and she followed the sound, approaching the open door of the room, where lay the bound man. She looked in; her late employer lay there, fettered and helpless. Then her courage rose; she was Mrs. Harris once more. She stood in the doorway and surveyed him coolly.

"Are you taking a nap, Senor?" she asked, sarcastically. "Where is my beauty? How came you in her room?"

"Get something and cut these cursed ropes, quick!" cried the man. "I have been robbed and nearly murdered."

"How you talk,"—seating herself composedly near the door,—"was my pretty girl murdered?"

"No; she ran away. Cut these ropes, Mrs. Harris, quick."

"I don't know about that," said the ballet mistress, reflectively. "What made you play me such a trick? Why do you pass yourself off for a Cuban? I have found you out."

The man looked startled. Did this woman know the truth, or only a part of it?

"What do you mean, madam?" he asked. "Will you not free me?"

"Not until you own the truth. Confess that you sent me on a fool's errand; that you are an impostor."

He writhed, and gnashed his teeth in impotent rage.

"Own up that you tried to murder that sweet girl, and that you were defeated. Oh, I know you!"

"Then don't ask useless questions. I see you are in the plot too," he snarled. "I paid you for all you did. Set me free and I will give you more money."

Mrs. Harris arose and drew her mantle about her like a Spartan.

"I'm a theatrical agent, Mr. Liar," she said, grandly. "I don't accept bribes from assassins. I believe in striking such men as you when they are down. You wouldn't like to have me get you some more ballet ladies, would you? No! Then good-day. Perhaps I'll send someone to cut you loose, after a while; but I may forget it, my memory is so defective." And with a cheerful nod and a mocking laugh, Mrs. Harris crossed the hall, gathered together her few effects, and shook the dust of that house from her feet.

"I flatter myself that was well done," she said, as she went downstairs. "I made the man think that I knew something, and then he owned up. I could not afford to help him. I don't run counter to any detectives, not if I know myself. But I must find out more about this, and about the girl."

And Mrs. Harris went back to the friendly roof of Mrs. Horne, the prophetess.

Jason Bradwardine, for very shame, had waited to be released by the ballet mistress, fearing her questioning less than an encounter with strange men, or, perhaps, the police. For long hours he had lain there, growing stiff and sore under the pressure of his bonds, to be jeered at, at last, by the cunning ballet mistress, and to be left still a prisoner.

He now tried his last resort; he lifted up his voice and cried loudly for help; again and again he called, but no help came; and lying there the entrapped villain swore a terrible oath, that, once free, he would hunt down and slay the man that had caught and caged him, albeit he did not then know that man's name.

At nine o'clock that evening an officer lounging about the entrance of a certain West-Side police station was approached by a ragged *gamin*, who slipped into his hand a note, and then ran away at the top of his speed. The officer gazed after him, muttered something under his breath, and went leisurely inside. There, by the gaslight, he read this scrawl:

"A man is alone in house No. —, N— Street, bound hand and foot; go and release him, and then 'spot' him. He is a grand rascal."

Thus it happened that after ten o'clock at night the "grand rascal" was visited by a posse of police, and was set at liberty, after having been a helpless prisoner since ten A.M.—twelve long hours. He was very cautious after that, for he knew himself for a marked man. He even made some feeble attempts at a disguise. But he was not quenched yet. In the quietest manner possible he set about a new work. For long hours of several days he searched files of city papers, and finally his search was rewarded. He had found the full account of the Arteveldt tragedy. He had assured himself of the truth of Lenore's statement. Then his courage revived, his assurance returned to him. He devised a new scheme, and set about its accomplishment. One day he boldly approached the

Arteveldt mansion, rang the bell, and asked to see Mrs. Arteveldt "upon important private business." Of course he obtained a hearing; not only this, he came the next day, and the next.

One day a gentleman rang the bell and asked for Kate Seaton. She came down, expecting, hoping to see Rob Jocelyn; but the face that met hers was a strange one. The gentleman arose as she entered the room, and presented to her a letter, saying courteously,

'Miss Seaton, I bring a letter of introduction from Mr. Jocelyn; it also explains my business here, I believe."

Kate took the note, bowed, blushed, and opened it. It was brief, to the point, and altogether characteristic of Rob Jocelyn. Thus it read:

"DEAR MISS SEATON,—This will introduce you to the first and best of English detectives, Mr. Francis Ferrars, who will call upon you in my stead, I being, to my deep regret, unable to leave business for a moment now. Can you contrive to get from Mrs. A——'s housekeeper the keys of the closed-up house? This by request of Mr. Bathurst. If they can be got without the knowledge of Mrs. Arteveldt it will be better. Please reply by Ferrars. By the bye—he is the present protector and champion of L—— A——, who is well, and, I believe, safe.—Yours,

"ROBERT JOCELYN."

Kate Seaton looked up from the perusal of this missive, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, her one thought that she might hear good news of Lenore.

"Oh, sir," she cried, breathlessly, "Mr. Jocelyn tells me that you are a friend to Miss Armyn. Tell me, is she safe? is she well?"

"She is safe and well, Miss Seaton," replied he with a smile, "and she wants to see you very much. Some day soon, I hope that you may visit her with safety."

Suddenly a shadow fell upon the girl's face.

"Then—she *is* in the city," she said, gravely. "Mr. Ferrars, I have something to communicate to Mr. Bathurst, something that he should know. Is he—where I could see him?"

"I am sorry that I cannot inform you, Miss Seaton. If you feel that you could trust Mr. Jocelyn—or—myself, as our interests are one with his—we would endeavour to communicate with him."

Kate hesitated for a moment, and then said,

"If you are the present protector of Lenore, you, too, should know this, I think. In telling you, I must betray the confidence of my patroness. But she is implacable against Lenore."

"If it affects Miss Armyn or Mr. Bathurst, Miss Seaton, you should not hesitate; this is not an ordinary case," said Francis Ferrars.

"Be seated, Mr. Ferrars," said Kate, with sudden resolve, at the same time seating herself. "I will tell you all that I know."

The detective took a seat near her, and she went on hurriedly,

"Several days ago a man called to see Mrs. Arteveldt, sending up word that his business was important. She went down all eagerness, of course, and in a little more than an hour returned terribly excited; and this is the sum of what she told me, in her half-hysterical way. The man had introduced himself as a detective from abroad; he said that he had been employed to find the mother of Lenore Armyn; she, Lenore's mother, having fled from her home after purloining a will that would enrich certain ones whom she hated. He had pursued her in order to regain the will, but finding that the mother was dead, and being informed that her papers were all in her daughter's possession, he had turned his attention to Lenore, of course. Three times, so he said, he had found her, and each time she had escaped him, twice through the interference of a young man whom he believed to be a detective. He had some reason for believing that Mrs. Arteveldt was being trifled with by the detective in her employ, and came to her privately, and as a friend, in the interests of justice and right. If Mrs. Arteveldt would favour him with a description of the man who was operating for her, he could then tell her if his suspicions were correct. As you may guess, he beguiled her into giving him a full description of Mr. Bathurst, and then he declared that he was not mistaken; that Lenore was in town, and that she had escaped from him, this man, only a week before. He had tracked her to an obscure locality, he said, had obtained access to the house, and was in the act of arresting her, knowing the charge against her, when a man, answering to the description of Mr. Bathurst, darted in, knocked him down with some iron weapon, and fled with the girl, leaving him lying senseless. All this has disturbed Mrs. Arteveldt, and put all manner of absurd ideas into her head. She declared her intention of sending for her lawyer, but the man held her to a

promise to hold his communications as confidential, saying that if she would say nothing about the affair, but would inform him when she would receive a visit from Mr. Bathurst, he would be near and trace out the hiding-place of poor Lenore. He has been here two or three times, and every visit seems more and more to unsettle Mrs. Arteveldt's faith in Mr. Bathurst. His brief reports of late, and his mysterious absence from the city, she construes against him—and I believe that she has promised to inform this man as soon as she has heard from him—although she has not told me so."

Mr. Ferrars was listening to this very gravely, and when Kate ceased speaking he sat for a few moments in thoughtful silence, then he asked,

"Did you see this man, Miss Seaton?"

"Yes; I believed him, from the first, to be an enemy to Mr. Bathurst, and I wanted to see him, so that if it seemed right to give warning, I would be able to describe him; the second time he came I waited in the drawing-room—they were in the library, and I came out so as to meet him face to face in the hall."

"Describe him, please."

Kate complied, and the detective instantly recognized the picture she drew. It was Bradwardine.

"Miss Seaton," said he, gravely, "you have done a brave and wise thing. The man you describe is an enemy, not only to Mr. Bathurst, but to Miss Armyn. Mr. Bathurst saved her from death at his hands. I hope it will not be long before you may know the whole truth, meanwhile you have put us on our guard. I will tell you this much now. We hope not only to clear Miss Armyn's name, but to find the true criminal, and you may, nay, you have, aided in this. Now about the keys. Can you help us there?"

Kate's eyes gleamed with the light of a sudden resolve.

"Yes," she said, with decision; "I will. I am a favourite with the housekeeper. I know where she keeps the keys. I will get them, and you shall have them."

"When?"

"To-morrow morning. Will that be in time?"

"Ample. How will I receive them?"

"I walk every morning; if you can promenade the avenue then, say for two or three blocks south from here, at nine o'clock, I will be there—with the keys."

"Thanks! Mr. Jocelyn was sure we might depend on you."

Again a rosy blush overspread the girl's face.

"I am ready to do anything to serve Lenore," she said.

"And you have served her. Have no further uneasiness about this meddler, Miss Seaton; you have balked his game, and I will look after him henceforth."

A few more words and then they separated, and as Francis Ferrars walked briskly towards his "quarters" once more, he muttered: "So, Mr. Bradwardine, we have not done with you yet."

CHAPTER XLV.

AT THE MASQUERADE.

It was the night of the masquerade ball; the night on which Miss Annin had desired that Aura Durand should accompany her. Miss Annin had insisted, too, that "Cousin Charles" should not accompany them. There had been some sharp skirmishing between these two young ladies. But, in the end, Miss Annin had triumphed, and Charles Durand reposed at home in ignorance of all that he might have enjoyed; while the two young ladies, each with a secret dread of the other at her heart, mingled with the masked and brilliant throng, at the Tip Top's masquerade. Such a scene as it was; such glow, and glitter; such bursts of music; such ripples and shouts of laughter; such knights and ladies of high degree; such an assembly of guests from long-closed tombs; of elves from other planets; of beings from the impossible realm; and they were so clever and condescending, and social withal. There were the Queen of Scots, Darnley and Queen Elizabeth, all on the best of terms. And they chatted and danced with Washington, Napoleon, and Marie Antoinette. There was Old Mother Hubbard waltzing madly with a big Cardinal; and Martha Washington taking an ice with Robin Hood. Then the brigands and gipsies, the pages and fairies; the Nights and Mornings, the flower-girls, the harlequins, the monks, the nuns, the fiends and the graces, they were all there. Through this glittering, varied throng moved two daughters of Araby, hand clasped in hand; their snowy flowing veils thrown back, their bright eyes gleaming out from behind their velvet masks, and wandering restlessly over the throng. They looked like affectionate sister houris, who had stolen from the harem for a brief hour of pleasure, and were somewhat overawed by all this glow and dazzle. Thus

they looked, as they paused in a little alcove of vines and flowers; but this is what they said:

"I don't see any such mask, and we have been all through the rooms; you have come on a fool's errand."

"Stuff!" It was the houri who had taken the lead that made this answer. "I tell you I saw the bill for the costume; he will come as Lara; we have only to wait."

"And what then?"

"And then see who she is."

"And after that?"

"After that—" with a short, bitter laugh, "I may ask your advice!"

"Bah! I know what will happen. There will be a scene, raving, recriminations; and then—reconciliation. I know you."

"Not so well as you will—later. There will be no scene; neither will there be any blood shed. My dear, I shall come back to you, and shall ruin him, that is all."

The second houri started back.

"Ruin him!" she exclaimed. "That will be to ruin yourself."

"Not if I am within the pale of respectability," with a mocking laugh. "Not if I am protected by you."

"And that you will not be."

"That I will be! Don't be a fool, please."

The second houri moved forward a step and then uttered a sudden exclamation. "See!" she said, turning to the other, "yonder comes your Lara, and he is in excellent company; on one side a priest and on the other the devil."

True enough, advancing towards them, came Lara, Mephistopheles, and a funereal-looking monk; and not far behind them a gery nun, with meekly-folded hands and drooping head, moved after.

"Well," said the houri who had last spoken," there is your Lara; now to find his fair enslaver."

The three masks were directly opposite them now, and the eyes of Mephistopheles fell upon them.

"Houris!" he cried, dropping the arm of Lara. "Houris escaped from the sultan. Look at them, Friar Lawrence."

But the monk crossed himself devoutly. "They are pagans," he groaned. "They are not like this holy sister," putting his hand out as the grey nun approached. The second houri laughed, a soft, cooing laugh. "You are powerless to harm us, O Satan," she said in the softest of tones, drawing near his sulphuric majesty. "We are promised Paradise."

"But I enter Paradise," quoth Mephistopheles, bending towards her, and suddenly seizing her hand. "Come, fair one, I will show you my kingdom, and then—you shall"—he paused, and the monk finished the sentence. "And then—you shall know purgatory. Houri, begone!"

The houri laughed again, and suffered the Prince of Darkness to lead her away. At the same moment Lara turned impatiently, made a sign to the monk, and moved across the vast hall. As he did so, the first houri, casting a glance in the direction taken by her companion and Mephistopheles, followed him swiftly, keeping a few paces from him.

When they were a little distance from the others, the second houri, clasping the satanic arm, and lifting appealing eyes to the mephistophelian mask, said,

"Sir Mask, I have suffered you to lead me away that I might ask a boon of you. Will you grant it?"

"If it is within my satanic power."

She looked back, with a pretty bird-like motion of the head, and then lifted her eyes again to his.

"You can," she whispered, eagerly. "It is only to convey a scrap of paper into the hand of the knight Lara."

He gazed intently down into those appealing eyes for a moment, and then he said,

"Satan submits; give me the paper, Houri."

She drew from her bodice a scrap of paper and pressed it into his hand.

"Wait for me," he whispered, and in a moment was striding through the throng.

"Oh!" whispered the houri, under her breath; "she did not think that I would dare so much. But I do not choose to have them quarrel yet."

At this moment the monk and the nun glided by like two ghosts, and sat down near her in a shadowy recess. A few moments later Lara held in his hand a scrap of paper containing these words:

"Be cautious; you are watched. The houri in the silver tunic is Nina."

Lara read these words, and then he crumpled the paper in his hand and walked indolently on, pausing a moment to chat with a flower-girl, a fairy, or a gipsy. Presently he paused before a pretty page, all glittering in blue and gold.

"We will dance together presently, Stella," he whispered; "but we must be cautious, we are watched. Go home before they unmask; I shall do the same."

So the second houri had thwarted the first. Lara and the two houris went wandering about, watching each other, more or less, the while; and wherever one of these were to be seen, Mephistopheles,

the monk, or the nun was sure to be near.

Mephistopheles, however, for a long time seemed most interested in the houri who had trusted him with the note for Lara. He conversed with her, listened to her soft, coaxing tones, watched her quick graceful movements, the lithe serpentine turnings of the beautiful throat, and the varying expressions of the often uplifted dark eyes. Then he passed on to others, but all the time he watched, from a distance, the movements of the houri in the golden tunic.

Finally he passed near the place where stood the nun, to all appearance contemplating the pomps and vanities of the pageant with an unfavourable eye, and made an almost imperceptible sign.

A moment later and the monk was exhorting the houri, who had been the object of the mephistophelian attentions, and Mephistopheles and the nun stood together in an alcove, where, for the moment, they were alone.

"Partner," said Mephistopheles, in a low, decided tone, "I have found her!"

"Found who?" asked the nun, almost carelessly.

"Found my murderess. Found Elise Schwartz."

"Are you sure? How do you know this?"

"Am I sure? Look here," opening his hand, in the palm of which lay a piece of canvas, upon which was painted a dark, beautiful eye. "Do you take that and follow me. When I stop to converse with a woman, do you approach, look at that piece of canvas, and then look at her eye. After that come back here and tell me your opinion."

The nun laughed. "Do you know who that woman is?" she asked.

"Yes; she is Elise Schwartz, I tell you."

"And what will you do?"

"Follow her home. Watch her—hunt her down!"

The nun laughed again. "You did well in coming here to-night. You might not have seen her else," she said.

His majesty started, and then laid a heavy hand upon the nun's shoulder.

"Look here, my friend," he exclaimed; "why did you advise me to come, and why are you here? Do you know that woman?"

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

The nun whispered a name in his ear.

"What?" Mephistopheles recoiled, astonished. "That girl! When did you find it out?"

"Find what out?"

"Why, that she is the one."

"I did not say that she was Elise Schwartz."

"But you implied it."

"True." Laughing again. "I suspected it long ago. I verified my suspicions quite recently. For further particulars—wait."

"Then I need not follow her home?"

"You may, if you wish to assure yourself that I am not mistaken. I must leave here now. Who put Lara on his guard?"

"I did; by request of the houri. If you leave now, I will shadow her home. Will you be at the rendezvous?"

"At one? Yes. Have you got the keys?"

"Will have them in the morning, without fail."

"Then all goes well. Old man, we are narrowing the circle."

"We are, and quarters are getting close."

Mephistopheles moved away, and soon after the nun disappeared from the festive scene.

At one o'clock that morning three stern-faced men sat around the little table in the rooms of Neil Bathurst; for more than two hours they sat there, conversing in low, eager tones, and then they arose and prepared to depart.

"Then we understand each other thoroughly," said one of these grave-featured men. "We begin now to act."

"Yes; from to-night our deeds will count. Arrest the gang, seize the murderess, expose the conspiracies, and set Lenore Armyn right before the world. Ah! this is work to my taste." And so they separated.

An hour later a single word was flying over the wires, addressed to James Durand. That word was "Come."

CHAPTER XLVI.

CAPTURING COUNTERFEITERS.

ANOTHER day has passed away, and the night sets in, dark and chill. Heavy clouds are hanging athwart the sky, and heavier clouds hang athwart the lives of some who, to-night, sit in fancied security, and think and dream of new crimes and fresh triumphs.

Mrs. Rogers' genteel boarding-house is aglow with lights to-night, for it is early, and Mrs. Rogers' boarders are assembled in the parlour, some of them, at least; for

the nice-looking young men who find the "comforts" of a home in the house of that buxom lady seldom go out evenings; they have few bad habits. Down in the basement the cook, who is somewhat given to "followers," sits peering through half-closed blinds, in the hope of seeing the good-looking young man who sells chromos, and who has given her several, not to mention two or three wonderful productions in the way of love letters from his pen that the postman has left for her. Cook is getting quite fond of this young man, but she entertains him under difficulties, for Mrs. Rogers does not approve of followers, and cook is forbidden to admit them to the kitchen. Presently the chromo young man appears; she knows him through the gloom, and goes to the door. They talk in whispers for a time, and occasionally the young man starts, fearing the approach of the majestic Rogers. He is even more timid than cook. But to-night his fears seem groundless. Cook becomes brave; she even suggests that they sit on the basement stairs, that ascend, after the manner of most basement stairs, straight up from the street door. But the "follower" will not dare too much. The night is chill, but the cook wears a shawl over her head; so they stand in the open doorway and eat bonbons; he has brought her delicious bonbons to-night, fresh from Gunther's. But bonbons beget thirst; the young man eats, and now and then glances out towards the street, and presently he is very thirsty. Will cook get him a glass of water? Of course she will. She tiptoes away towards the kitchen and the young man waits in the open doorway. Scarcely has her back turned before a shadow approaches the door; it steals past the nice young man, glides up the basement stairs, and disappears above.

Presently comes cook with the water, and then they talk again for many minutes. Finally the "follower" takes a farewell sip of water, whispers a few fond words and goes; but the shadow has not come down.

It grows later; the lights begin to be extinguished above stairs, and Mrs. Rogers comes down, looks to the fastenings of doors and windows, and then goes upstairs and repeats the process. Her doors are guarded by double locks, her windows double barred. Never was house more securely fastened than is this. But the shadow is locked in.

Mrs. Rogers is a very careful landlady; she goes about peering into closets and all sorts of places where an intruder might conceal himself, could he once get within these walls. But she finds no intruder; the shadow has disappeared.

And now the lights are all out in Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house; doubtless the family has retired. An hour passes; still darkness and silence; Mrs. Rogers and her family are, probably, now asleep. Half an hour later and four men come silently down the street and station themselves at the different doors opening from that silent, darkened house.

A few minutes more, and two men pause before the door of the ill-fated dwelling fitted up by Clarence Arteveldt for his unwilling bride; one of these ascends the steps, noiselessly unlocks the door, and speaks in a low tone to his companion, who instantly joins him, and together they vanish within. Carefully they close and bolt the door behind them, and then one of them produces from somewhere a dark lantern. Lighted by this they mount up the stairs, then up another flight, until they stand underneath the very roof. Then, while one holds the lantern aloft, the other unfastens the trap door, which, since the murder and the investigations of Neil Bathurst, has been securely fastened. Then they raise the trap cautiously, and one of them whispers,

"Are you there, Rob?"

"Yes," the answer comes, and they open the trap; a hand from the outside takes it and folds it back, and then Rob Jocelyn lowers himself through the opening.

"Here we are," he whispers; "how did you leave the old woman, Ferrars?"

"Perfectly calm; she never dreamed of your presence. Did you encounter any difficulties?"

"None. The way was clear, and the trap is now ready to open."

"Good," said Neil Bathurst; "then we may as well proceed. It's all right below."

One after another they clambered upon the roof, and then coming to the corresponding trap in the other house, they open that with the greatest ease. Then Rob Jocelyn lets himself down with the agility of a cat, and vanishes.

"It's all right," he whispers, re appearing a moment later; "they are hard at it, have been for an hour back. Come down, pards."

Francis Ferrars, who has so recently personated a nice young picture-seller, and in this character won the confidence of Mrs. Rogers' cook, goes down into the dark abyss of Mrs. Rogers' attic, and Neil Bathurst follows after. Then they raise the dark lantern and look about them. It is a genuine attic, filled in with everything old and useless. A partition forming an L runs across the front and left side of the

attic, and the stairway is protected by still another partition. While they are taking these observations they can hear the low murmur of voices, and occasionally another sound that causes Rob Jocelyn's eyes to flash as if in anticipation of something refreshing. It is but the work of an instant to unfasten the door opening upon the landing of the attic stairs, and then they pause between two doors, one in front and one to the left, as if undecided which to approach. After listening for a moment, Rob Jocelyn, who seems to lead this expedition, signifies by a gesture that the left-hand door is the one, and then Francis Ferrars puts his hand to his side and draws forth a pair of revolvers. Neil Bathurst has armed himself in the same manner, and now they are ready.

The door at the front is opened by Rob Jocelyn, and, pistols in hand, he enters the attic room. Six men start up at his entrance; six men who at that moment were bending over plates and dies, and all the paraphernalia of a counterfeiters' den. A little further a young woman stands at a desk busy with some newly-printed bogus bank-notes, and beside her sits George Fordham, the reporter, affixing the signatures to these same bogus bills.

Rob Jocelyn has opened the door noiselessly, and he enters the room with a spring like a cat. For just one second the counterfeiters are off their guard, and then weapons flash in the gaslight. But that one second of panic, of irresolution, is the second that tells. Rob covers George Fordham with one pistol, and the nearest counterfeiter with another; and while they lay their hands upon their weapons, his voice, low and calm, says, with telling effect,

"Surrender, men, the house is guarded, resistance useless; make the first attempt and we will shoot you down where you stand."

Suddenly there is a rush towards the left-hand door. But while they have been gazing at Rob Jocelyn that avenue of escape has been cut off. Four bright weapons menace them, and Francis Ferrars says sternly,

"Your case is hopeless, sirs; surrender, in the name of the law!"

The counterfeiters are bewildered; they are seven to three, but six of the seven are covered by revolvers, held in firm hands; while they, because of the suddenness of the attack, stand, armed it is true, but, in the face of those deadly weapons, not daring to aim a pistol. Suddenly the girl at the desk leans over Fordham; the detectives are watching the men, they will not think of her, so she thinks; but one there knows her, and knows her to be as dangerous as the fiercest man of the gang. She turns quickly; she raises a pistol; she is taking aim at the heart of Rob Jocelyn.

"Mrs. Pomeroy!"

The pistol falls from nerveless fingers; the woman turns a white, scared face towards the speaker.

"I would not attempt that again, Mrs. Pomeroy. You have damaged officers enough." It is Francis Ferrars who speaks, and his weapons are still aimed at the men. "I shall shoot you if you make it necessary. Do you know me?"

The woman utters a cry of terror.

"Yes; you are—Ferrars," she gasped. "Why are you here?"

"To take you back to England if you make it necessary. Will you obey me, if I spare you that?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Listen, then. This house is so securely guarded that you can escape in no possible way. I shall deal with you according to your present conduct. Come here."

Like some tamed animal the woman obeyed him.

"Stand away from these men and their weapons, over there. Now, Mr. Jocelyn, shall we fire upon these fellows?"

"We shall! if they don't lay down their arms pretty quick," replied Rob, in his characteristic way.

"George Fordham, do you surrender?"

George Fordham had been sitting like an abject coward before his desk. Suddenly he lifted his pistol, placed it against his breast and fired. There was a shriek from the woman, a murmur of horror from the now panic-stricken counterfeiters; and then Rob Jocelyn moved nearer the men he had under his weapon.

"Lay down your pistols, men, and hold up your hands. Quick!"

They hesitated but a moment, and then obeyed him; and the remaining four, seeing this, did likewise. In less time than it takes to tell it the six were handcuffed and helpless, and Rob Jocelyn was filling his capacious pockets with the pistols of the gang.

Neil Bathurst approached the bleeding would-be suicide; he was not dead, but might be dangerously wounded.

"You had better go below," he said to his comrades. "I will attend to the—lady."

The six men were marched downstairs, at the mouth of the pistol. Here they came suddenly upon Mrs. Rogers; she had been aroused from sleep by the report of Fordham's pistol, and almost before she knew it she, too, was handcuffed. They found,

ikewise, two men below who had been used to circulate, in various ways and places, spurious money of the Fordham manufacture. It had scarcely been five minutes since the shot that aroused them was fired, and they were all overcome and made captive. The servants were allowed to go free upon being assured by Mrs. Rogers that they were entirely innocent of anything carried on above the basement stairs.

The door was opened now, and the officers who had been stationed without were called in. One of them instantly departed to summon others, and while they waited, Jocelyn and Ferrars made a thorough examination of the house. They found large quantities of the manufactured paper money, as well as considerable coin.

The house was elegant in all its appointments, and, but for the suspicions aroused in the mind of Neil Bathurst, while investigating the Arteveldt murder, might have prospered for years under the guise of a first-class and highly respectable boarding-house.

The officer who had been sent for reinforcements, was also commissioned to call a physician for the wounded Fordham. Neil Bathurst had remained beside him, and in charge of the woman whom he had known as Nina Annin, and who had been addressed, with startling effect, as Mrs. Pomeroy, by Ferrars. Neil was at a loss here. He knew nothing of the Mrs. Pomeroy business, and was inwardly wondering about it, when the physician and Francis Ferrars mounted to the counterfeiters' operating room.

After a careful examination, the man of medicine pronounced upon Fordham's case. He was badly hurt, but would live with proper care. Then Neil Bathurst turned to the woman.

"Miss Annin," he said gravely, "you are under arrest as one of the gang taken in this house in the very act of counterfeiting. I can't help you there, if I would; but you may be held upon other charges that will make your case utterly hopeless. This I may be able to prevent, or rather you may."

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Annin.

"I mean that you are charged with being an accomplice in the murder of Clarence Arteveldt; and also of having a hand in the Durand robbery."

"What!" The woman sprang up in unfeigned astonishment. "I! Mr. Bathurst, who accuses me?"

'Miss Durand, indirectly; directly, myself."

"Aura Durand! Dare she so much as hint such a thing?"

"She has dared that and more. Are you ready to tell all you know concerning Aura Durand and her connections with Clarence Arteveldt?"

The woman hesitated, and while she did so Mr. Ferrars moved nearer and looked in her face.

"Which will benefit you most," he said; "to tell what you know of Miss Durand, and so assist the officers of justice, or to have me tell what I know of Mrs. Pomeroy, and so insure for you a double, perhaps a life sentence?"

"If I do tell what you wish me to, you will denounce me."

"If you tell Mr. Bathurst what he wishes to hear, and if he assures me of his belief in your truthfulness, I will tell him and no other what I know of you. American justice shall deal with you as it will."

She turned towards Neil Bathurst. "Are you hunting her down?" she asked.

"I am hunting down Clarence Arteveldt's murderess. You know who that is."

"And—will my evidence turn the scale against her?"

"No; with or without your evidence she will be under arrest within twenty-four hours."

"Ah!" with flashing eye; "she will come down from her stilts then. Mr. Bathurst, I will answer your questions."

"Very good; they must be answered in the presence of a lawyer and others. And now—come, Miss Annin."

"Come! Where will you take me?"

"With the others — to the station-house."

With drooping head and vanquished spirit Nina Annin obeyed, and soon the eight counterfeiters and their two female accomplices were marched through the bleak and silent streets, and safely lodged between stout stone walls, and behind hopeless iron bars.

The doctor and two policemen were left in charge of the wounded man, who was removed to the hospital at dawn. And then, having seized upon the counterfeiters' outfit, Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house was closed.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BATHURST'S LAST REPORT.

THE telegram that went speeding southwards to James Durand, brought him swiftly back to the city. He knew full well the meaning of that single word "Come." He

arrived in the grey of morning, the same morning that saw the breaking up of the counterfeiting gang, and the arrest of the tenantry of Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house. But he did not hasten to his splendid home. He was driven to an obscure hotel, and there remained for more than three hours.

At the expiration of that time Neil Bathurst appeared. The two men shook hands, and looked gravely at each other.

"You see I am punctual," said the old man. "How goes your work, Bathurst?"

"It is nearly done, sir. And how is Mrs. Durand?"

The old man's face clouded.

"Bathurst," he cried, "I think I could see that she-fiend hanged to-day. Listen, with all our precautions she almost overreached us. We had been gone four days when I came in one morning and found Mrs. Durand in great agony. I sent for a doctor and then questioned the servant. What had Mrs. Durand drank or eaten? She had eaten nothing, the woman said, but had seemed growing worse since she drank the wine. What wine? I asked. Why, said the creature, the wine Miss Aura had brought, the very last thing, to be packed because her mother was so fond of it, and she might not find it where we were going. Think of it, Bathurst! My wife all but died that night, and the physician discovered the poisonous symptoms. I had to tell him the whole story then; and, as soon as the danger was past, I told my wife the truth"—here a twinkle came into his eyes. "My boy, what do you think she said then?"

Neil smiled and shook his head.

"Well, she was terribly cut up, I could see that, but, after she had fully contemplated the matter, she raised herself on her elbow and said: 'James, I always said there was something queer about that girl.' Think of that, Bathurst; nothing will quench a woman's inevitable 'I told you so,' I verily believe."

Neil Bathurst smiled in spite of himself. "That is a woman's ultimatum," he said. "And we borrow it for our own use sometimes. For instance, I told you that your bait would set on foot a new scheme of murder. And it has."

"Has it?" queried the old man, grimly. "Well, I am prepared to believe anything in that line now, and I am prepared to act too. So tell me your plans, man. I have no more scruples."

"That is well, sir," replied the detective, gravely; "then, if you are ready and have breakfasted, we will go to Mr. Hale's office. I have an appointment there for this morning."

They drove straight to Mr. Hale's office, and as they were about to enter the building in which it was, two gentlemen approached from the direction of Bathurst's rooms, not many blocks away. These were Doctor Austin and Francis Ferrars.

Doctor Austin had arrived in the city the night before, in response to a dispatch from Francis Ferrars, and because of the work on hand for that night had been compelled to wait until morning for an explanation to the strange telegram that had brought him to the city. For more than two hours this morning he had been closeted with the English detective, and now, as he approached, Doctor Austin was fully aware of the truth concerning Lenore Armyn, of all that Neil Bathurst had done, of her identity, and her present whereabouts. This morning, for the first time, he had learned that the husband from whom he had assisted Lenore to flee had been murdered on that very night. The doctor's face wore a mixed expression of gratification, wonder, and awe, as, fresh from the Englishman's strange recital, he approached Bathurst. But he extended to the quondam John Jacob a hearty greeting, and after an introduction and a few low-spoken words of explanation, the four men ascended the stairs that led to the office of Mr. Hale.

The lawyer was there to receive them, and Neil Bathurst came straight to the point. "Mr. Hale," he said, "I come to make to you my last report concerning the Arteveldt tragedy. And as these gentlemen are more deeply, or I might say closely, interested in the issue than either you or I, their presence is of course necessary. Mr. Durand, you know; allow me to present Doctor Austin, of Fairlie, the lawful guardian of the lady we have known as Lenore Armyn, and Francis Ferrars, England's ablest detective."

The lawyer greeted the strangers with elaborate courtesy, and then led the way to his private sanctum.

"Here we have the required privacy," he said, bowing to Neil Bathurst, and drawing forth easy-chairs for the party. "Be seated, gentlemen."

And Mr. Hale seated himself, feeling inwardly as much astonished as he could ever feel at anything. Mr. Durand, the Fairlie doctor, and the English detective! What could the strange combination mean?

Neil Bathurst drew his chair up to the lawyer's table, and took from his pocket a packet of papers. These he laid upon the table, and then said,

"I have come to you as Mrs. Arteveldt's agent, Mr. Hale, and when you have heard what I have to say, you will know

why I make this, my last report, or statement, in her case, verbally, and to you in her absence. Certain portions of my story are known to these gentlemen, but not the same portions, and not all that I have now to relate. It might be said that, at this moment, Mr. Durand and myself represent one interest; Mr. Ferrars and Doctor Austin, although strangers until to-day, another; and yourself a third. But I will begin. You have had my report, Mr. Hale, up to the time when Lenore Armyn escaped from me, and from Doctor Burton's Insane Asylum. Since then I have had excellent reasons for withholding any reports concerning her. I shall not now relate the particulars of events that have since transpired, but will simply say that Miss Armyn is found."

"Found!" ejaculated Mr. Hale. "But that is good news."

"Yes, it is a matter for congratulation. Miss Armyn is found — and — Clarence Arteveldt's murderess is also found."

"Of course; of course," from Mr. Hale again.

"Not of course, sir. Miss Armyn and the murderess are two distinct and very different persons."

"What!"

"Listen, Mr. Hale and gentlemen. When I was called upon to investigate this unprecedented murder, I found a very strong case of circumstantial evidence against this lady, all ready to hand. I saw that it was a very strong case, and I saw, instantly, that to hint at a possibility of a different actor in the drama, would be to prejudice against myself, not only Mrs. Arteveldt and her friends, but even you, Mr. Hale. When I stood beside the body of the murdered man, and saw the manner in which death had reached him, I knew that no girl, ignorant of anatomy and unskilled in crime, could have stricken such a blow, although she may have been never so frantic, never so mad with despair, and never so frenzied with a thirst for vengeance. But I said nothing of this. The verdict of the jury was the popular verdict, and it's a detective's business to produce and state facts, not opinions—especially when his opinion will run counter to the general one.

"Well, I went to work. I had never seen the accused, and so could not judge of her from observation, but I began a systematic hunting up of everybody who knew her. Even her enemies spoke some good of Lenore Armyn. She had a furious temper, but was frank, fearless, generous to a fault, and devoid of trickery, treachery, or deceit in any form. Even those who believed in her guilt extolled her as she had hitherto been, and declared themselves in sympathy with her, as her wrong had been so great. Finally I got possession of a quantity of letters written by her to Miss Seaton—school-girl letters,—and these endorsed what others had said. After reading them I said this: 'Either this is an impulsive, sensitive, high-souled, high-spirited, fearless, and innocent girl—in which case she is no murderess—or else, she is a hypocrite from the foundation upwards, in which case she may have committed no end of crimes.' Then I set myself to assure myself whether she was one or the other, and I freely confess that I never yet found a case that so puzzled and baffled me up to the very last moment. I was at times ready to declare that the girl was a monomaniac. I will not now relate all the things that so baffled and puzzled me, although they were not included in my reports, and might prove interesting. The 'crooked places' have been made tolerably straight to me, although during my entire search—during my life, in fact—I have never seen Miss Armyn save once, and then for a few exciting minutes only.

"When I examined the scene of the tragedy I discovered that the trap-door opening out upon the roof was not fastened. I mentioned this fact in my first report, and I made a mental note of it, for I could not divest myself of the idea that the destroyer might have entered the house from the roof."

"But," interrupted Mr. Hale, "you stated in your report that you thought that theory the least probable of any."

"I said, in my report, that a man might have gained the roof by means of hooks and ropes, but that it was impossible for a woman, and that this theory was, even supposing the criminal a man, a highly improbable one. If I had mentioned my suspicion that the house next door might furnish a clue to the mystery, that house would have been invaded forthwith, and then we would have lost our hold upon the murderess, as well as been deprived of the pleasure of capturing and consigning to the hands of justice the sharpest gang of counterfeiters that ever infested this city. You will know what this means, gentlemen, when you read the evening papers. I made private inquiries concerning the house, and resolved to keep an eye upon its inmates. And—I was careful to let no word fall from my lips that might set any busy tongue to wagging on the subject of 'the house next door.'

"After the inquest, as you will remem-

ber, Mr. Hale, I visited the rooms that had been occupied by Clarence Arteveldt for years, in his mother's house. I went there to examine the papers and effects of the deceased, in the hope of obtaining some clue to the murder. In doing an act of justice one cannot always spare even the dead; you, Mr. Hale, and Mr. Durand also, know something of the life he led. But it remained for these letters to reveal how entirely he was engrossed in trifling with the affections of women of all sorts, good, bad, and indifferent. I read through a sickening mass of *billets-doux*, and from the lot I 'evolved' one scrap of paper that I considered worthy of preservation. Here it is."

And he took the first paper from the packet before him and laid it by itself.

"Next I searched in the pockets of all the garments hanging in the closets and wardrobes, and in the coat he had discarded for the wedding broadcloth I found —this."

He laid a second note beside the first, and then continued:

"In walking about the room I noticed that he, or some one, had been burning papers of some sort, and on looking closer I found this fragment." He placed a half-burned letter beside the other two, and said, "Mr. Hale, will you now read the first of these—read it aloud?"

Mr. Hale took up the first paper and read—

"I begin to doubt you. Don't think me blind, or that I am one to submit to neglect, *after what has been*. Remember, you are not dealing with one friendless or helpless. I must see you *to-night*.

"August 9, 187—."

Mr. Hale read this aloud, and then laid it down without a comment.

"This note," resumed the detective, "is, as you see, without address or signature. And it is not an ordinary love-letter. It is dated less than a month prior to the first meeting of Arteveldt and Miss Armyn. 'I begin to doubt you,' it says—doubtless this was one of the 'old loves' that the young man was so constantly putting off for new ones. But this one is not to be trifled with, and she rebels. She reminds him that she is neither friendless nor helpless, and then she commands, 'I must see you to-night.' Now, Mr. Hale, please read the next note, the one found in the coat-pocket."

Again Mr. Hale complied, reading the second note as he had the first, without comment or question.

"I have seen the girl you think to make your wife; and—*she does not love you*—I swear it. I have warned you before. I repeat that warning. Break off this marriage, even at the last moment. Break it off, or the thunderbolt that hangs over you will fall."

"See," said the detective, when the lawyer had put this note aside, "it is in the same hand as the first one. It warns, or threatens—or both. It bids him break off his marriage, or dread the thunderbolt. Gentlemen, he did not break off the marriage, and three days after the date of this letter the thunderbolt had fallen. Clarence Arteveldt lay a corpse.

"Now comes the third letter, or fragment of one. It is in the handwriting of the murdered man. Probably he wrote this letter, and then, for some reason, rewrote it, throwing this copy into the grate. Now I begin to theorize: This letter is partially destroyed; we must guess at the meaning of half of it. I thought that some woman, doubtless this one who had written him these two letters, had made some demands upon him. I think that he sent back to her her letters and pictures, and that these two were overlooked in making up the package. I think that he told her how idle and useless were her threats, and then resorted to a little judicious flattery; speaking of her beauty, her position, &c., and that he ended by saying she must keep aloof from his wife; such a letter would be characteristic of the man. I founded my reasoning, gentlemen, on these fragments of sentences:

"'This day return to you——and gifts. Have retained nothing.——these useless threats——the admiration your beauty commands——position warrants——shall be your friend——two must not meet.'

"Well, I read these three documents, and this is the theory I evolved from them: Some woman who was beautiful, accomplished, and, perhaps, of high social standing, had been the favoured of this young Launcelot of the drawing-room; he had grown weary of the flame, and she had sought to hold him; then had come Lenore Armyn, and he had grown still more neglectful. She had written him other letters full of warning and threats, but these had been returned, as he states here; probably he believed what he said, that he had retained nothing. Doubtless he was careless, hurried, even impatient, in gathering up these letters; he was disposing of the old love, you know. Well,

the popular theory was that Lenore Armyn, because of her wrongs, had taken the life of her husband. Here was another who complained, who had been even more deeply wronged, perhaps; might not she have laid her plans and struck down her destroyer on his wedding night?

"I said nothing of these notes or of my suspicions, but I worked to find, not only Lenore Armyn, but this other one, and then to fix the guilt where it belonged. I knew of one young lady who had been more or less talked of in connection with Clarence Arteveldt, but it seemed quite absurd to think of her as the suspected one. I had met this lady—and just here I may as well say how. One day, the 2nd of September last, as I sat at lunch, Clarence Arteveldt sought me, saying that the house of a friend had been robbed, and more than twenty thousand dollars taken from a private desk. I hastened to the scene of the robbery, and made a minute investigation of the premises, and I at once decided that no burglar did the deed; no one had forced an entrance, and, spite of the fact that the front door was open, I did not believe that a burglar had gone away from that house after robbing it. In short, I suspected a 'put-up job,' and I began to look for the robber in the family of the robbed man. Well, I was baffled here, but a strange suspicion entered my mind, and I resolved to let the matter die down, and then to begin it afresh. The young lady of the house, as I have said, had been a friend of Arteveldt's. I questioned him concerning her, and soon saw that it was a sore subject. One day he chaffed me in turn, saying that a certain George Fordham had told him that I was a frequent visitor at this house. Now, I was not aware that this Fordham was on calling terms there, and I felt a little surprised at this, and resolved to ascertain how, and to what end. Mr. George Fordham kept himself so well informed concerning me. I inquired in a careless manner, and was assured that Mr. Fordham was barely known to the lady in question. A few days before his marriage Arteveldt made what I considered an odd request; he asked me to ascertain, in an off-hand way, what the young lady thought of his marriage with Miss Armyn. I made a mental note of this, and after the tragedy it came back to my mind.

"Now I will go back to the letters; having read these, I looked up Fordham, and talked with him about Arteveldt and his affairs; I knew that if any one could give me information upon this subject he was the man. But Fordham fought shy, and denied any knowledge of an old love affair; but while he denied it I saw in his eye that he lied. Next I went to Fairlie, to see what I could learn from Doctor Austin here."

Mr. Hale turned his eyes upon Doctor Austin, and saw that both he and Mr. Ferrars were smiling significantly.

"At Fairlie," pursued Bathurst, "I was surprised to find my friend and brother detective, Robert Jocelyn. He was there in pursuit of an English scoundrel whom he had been shadowing for weeks. And now I must deviate, or seem to, again while I put in a word concerning Rob Jocelyn.

"He had arrived in this city on the first day of last September, after a five years' absence in Europe. While in London he had been employed in working up a murder case. One Schwartz, a Jewish broker, and Rebecca Schwartz, his sister, both aged people, had been murdered by the girl-wife of the old man. Jocelyn had searched all Europe for the murderess, who had fled, taking with her a large and very valuable collection of jewels that had been hoarded by the miserly old man. He had at last came to America, in the hope of finding Elise Schwartz on this continent.

"I was glad to come upon Jocelyn thus unexpectedly, for I wanted his help. I began to tell him my business, and described the manner of the murder, whereupon Jocelyn sprang up in great excitement, declared that Clarence Arteveldt and the Jew, Schwartz, had been killed in the same way, and he believed by the same weapon, and the same hand. The wound in the temple in each case had been made with the stylet, an instrument similar to the Spanish stiletto, but smaller, and keener even than that. This statement seemed improbable; how could Lenore Armyn and this Elise Schwartz be the same? They could not; this we knew. But the stylet is a foreign weapon, little used, and the coincidence served to deepen our interest in the case."

The detective paused for a moment; his four auditors were listening with almost breathless attention; what he now stated was new, alike to all.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MURDERESS IS FOUND.

THE detective sat in thoughtful silence for a few moments, and then resumed his story.

"I can now condense my narrative a little more, and yet make myself under-

stood," he said. "I might say much of Leonore Armyn, for Jocelyn had made some startling discoveries concerning her while in Fairlie, but that must remain until another time. Now we must talk of the murderess.

"I told Jocelyn all that I had discovered and all I had surmised, and the next morning he started back to the city to keep a watch upon the suspected house, and upon Mr. Fordham. My information concerning the house was this: It had been taken a few days after Arteveldt had secured the other by a middle-aged woman, representing herself to be a widow; she intended to open a fashionable boarding-house, she said. Now, mark this, the two houses were taken within the same week, but, while that of Clarence Arteveldt was ready for its occupants many days before the wedding, the other house was still vacant on the wedding night.

"Well! Rob attended to the house, and I remained in Fairlie, as you know, for three long months.

"A few days after my return from Fairlie, I received a note from the young lady who was said to have been, at one time, a special friend of Arteveldt's, and whose father had been robbed so mysteriously, and I may as well begin here to use the name of that young lady. It was Miss Aura, the adopted daughter of this gentleman, Mr. James Durand."

The lawyer turned a startled face towards Mr. Durand, but that gentleman merely nodded, and then turned his stern face towards the detective.

"At the time of the robbery," continued Neil, "Miss Durand had with her a Miss Nina Annin, a hired companion, who was seemingly a prime favourite with the young lady of the house. I had been in the society of these two young ladies—previous to the murder—frequently; and for a purpose. And—I had assured myself that the bond between them was not that of love. But, so clever was their outward seeming, that it was impossible for me to guess which held the mastery over the other. When I called, after my three months' absence, and in response to her note, I found Miss Durand without a companion. Before going to Miss Durand's room, however, I met Mr. Durand, and, at his request, entered the room of his wife, who, he said, was slightly indisposed. I sat beside Mrs. Durand for a time, and I listened to minute a description of her symptoms. And then I knew that her slight indisposition was a creeping insidious danger; that she was being slowly poisoned. Unseen by any one, I took from the table near her couch a bottle, that she had told me contained her medicine. Well, I will dispose of this part of my story now. I took the bottle to Doctor Worthing, and he analyzed the medicine. It contained a strong mineral poison.

"Then I told Mr. Durand the truth, and convinced him that it *was* truth. He took his wife away from the city, starting suddenly, and taking only one servant with them. Before he went we fully understood each other. He put a woman in charge of his house, whom I had recommended, and whom I knew I could depend upon; and he did other things that will develop themselves later. His house held a dark secret, and he left me to penetrate it. Now, I must go back to that call upon Miss Durand. She had sent for me, she said, to learn something more than she already knew of the Arteveldt tragedy; she wanted to know if I had found any clue to the fugitive bride, etc. But I knew that I had not come to the true reason of her desire to see me, yet. Presently I spoke of Miss Annin, and then she managed to convey to me, under a pretence of speaking regretfully, pitifully, and affectionately, of the girl, the idea that it was Miss Annin, and not herself, who had been abandoned for Lenore Armyn, by young Arteveldt. She, Miss Durand, had been aware of the true state of affairs, and had suffered herself to be misrepresented, for the sake of her friend. But she had been obliged to give Miss Annin up; and then in the same soft, insinuating way, she said enough to make me understand that Miss Annin was the one who had robbed Mr. Durand, and that she, Miss Aura, had done all that she could to shield her. Out of pity, of course. Then I knew why she had sent that note. She wanted to place Miss Annin under suspicion. As I was about to go I asked Miss Aura if she could give me the address of Miss Annin. She replied, that Miss Annin was at present stopping with a Mrs. Rogers, who kept a boarding-house, and who was said to be her aunt. Well, this I knew already, and I knew, too, that 'Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house' was the very one then under suspicion—the house next that of the late Clarence Arteveldt. Having satisfied myself on this point, I next asked Miss Aura if she would give me a scrap of Miss Annin's handwriting. She hesitated for a time, and then said that she would if I would give her my word not to use it to the injury of Miss Annin. I promised this, readily; and then she said that she could not then put her hand upon the writing of her late companion, but would

look for some and send it to me through the mail. I had told her that I would leave town again very soon. While we were conversing, and just after being assured by Miss Aura, that she and her late companion did not visit each other, a servant announced Miss Annin; and before Miss Aura could utter a word Miss Annin herself sailed into the room. Of course I withdrew; but I paused outside the door long enough to hear Miss Aura say, in a cold, angry voice: 'What do you want now?'

"'One thousand dollars,' replied Miss Annin, coolly.

"And then Miss Aura exclaimed, 'What, more money?'

"I had heard enough to give me something to think of, and I hurried away then. You must remember that this was before Mr. Durand took his wife away. On the day the poisoning was discovered, in fact.

"Many things engaged my time for days after that, and when next I called at Mr. Durand's house, he, as I was well aware, was away with his wife. Mrs. Richards, the woman who was left in charge of the house, was under my instructions, and I knew how things were moving there. Miss Aura, in the meantime, had sent me the asked-for specimen of Miss Annin's writing, and, as I fully expected, it was the same as those two notes that I took from among the papers in Clarence Arteveldt's room. I had found pretexts for writing Miss Durand several notes, and of course they had been answered, so you will see that I had now what was supposed to be samples of the penmanship of both Miss Aura and her quondam companion.

"One day Miss Aura sent for Mrs. Richards, the new housekeeper; she had received several letters that morning, and among them one from Mr. Durand. This letter informed her in the pleasantest and kindest manner that he, Mr. Durand, had just discovered that he had a nephew living, the son of an only brother, and that therefore he could not, as had always been expected, make her his sole heiress. She would, of course, marry well, and he owed a duty to his nephew, &c., &c. He finished by saying that his nephew, Mr. Charles Durand, would arrive in the city almost as soon as did his letter, and that he should leave it to Miss Aura to entertain him properly in the house that was henceforth to be his home. Now some young ladies might have been angry, even prejudiced against this young man who had come between her and a fine fortune. But Miss Aura sent for Mrs. Richards, told her that a favourite nephew of her 'papa's' was about to arrive, and desired that every honour should be paid the young man.

"While she was talking Mrs. Richards surreptitiously picked from the ashes of the grate a crumpled-up letter that had doubtless been thrown there to burn, but that had fallen short of the flames. It was a note from Miss Annin, and a very commanding one. That note is now in my possession.

"Well, the nephew arrived, and the next day came Miss Annin. She had stated in her note that Miss Aura must go shopping with her. Miss Aura had not called as instructed in the note, so the mountain had come to Mahomet. There was a warm scene. Miss Aura rebelled, and whispered something in the ear of the other, that seemed to take away her breath for half a second; then she rallied, whipped out her purse, and took from it a bit of cloth which she held before the horrified eyes of Miss Aura. This seemed to have the desired effect; each seemed to be a little in awe of the other, and they went shopping together, appearing the most amiable of young ladies. When Miss Annin reached home, however, she found that her pocket had been picked, and the little purse containing the little bit of cloth was gone.

"Miss Aura seemed restless that night, and retired to her rooms very early, but Mrs. Richards followed her, and she found no chance for solitary reflection. Presently Mrs. Richards coaxed her to retire, and she, doubtless to get rid of the good housekeeper, consented. I don't think she intended to sleep, but scarcely had her head touched the pillow before she was in dreamland—the housekeeper had drugged her.

"Then I was admitted to her rooms, no matter how, and I made a thorough search. In a trunk that had a false bottom I found two packets of letters, and a case containing thousands of dollars worth of unset jewels, and in another trunk that was locked and the key thereof kept upon the person of Miss Aura, I found a valise, containing the proofs that *Aura Durand was guilty of the murder of Clarence Arteveldt.*"

Mr. Hale started violently, and again turned to gaze at Mr. Durand, but that gentleman looked as stern as fate, as immovable as the sphinx. Doctor Austin, too, looked considerably startled. But Francis Ferrars was not at all astonished.

"Think what a skilful *intrigante* this girl, or woman, is," continued Bathurst. "The two packets of letters revealed a

long and close intimacy between the murdered man and herself. One was the packet returned to her by Arteveldt, and to which he referred in that fragment of burned letter, a complete copy of which was with this packet. The other smaller letter packet contained letters written by him. She had returned him some of his letters, and he had burned them; but a few, those that he would care least to have seen by his wife or mother, she had retained, together with several pictures of him. No doubt she had discovered that two of her notes were missing, and knowing of my search, as she did from Mrs. Arteveldt, she took measures to throw suspicion upon the woman who was her enemy—Nina Annin.

"She put me off to gain time, and wrote a line which she sent to me as the writing of Miss Annin, while the notes she sent me were all written by her maid. The note found in the grate was really written by Miss Annin, and Mrs. Richards took care to get a sample of the maid's writing, which corresponds exactly with the notes sent me by Miss Aura, and bearing her signature.

"The letters and the jewels I kept, but I took care to replace them with three packages that so closely resembled the genuine ones, that, unless they were examined into, the fraud would not be detected. I did the same with the black valise. I removed its contents, filled it with something else, relocked it, and replaced it in the trunk. When I left the room I was careful to leave everything as I found it. I will tell you now the fate of that black valise.

"At daybreak Aura Durand stole from the house. No doubt the drug had delayed her movements considerably, and she carried in her hand that same dark valise. She went straight down to the lake and out upon a pier. Here she dropped the valise into the water, watched it sink, and then hurried back home. She believed that she was sinking the evidences of her crime. But these were in my possession.

"Mr. Hale, in my first report I said that Clarence Arteveldt was killed by a small foreign weapon, known as the stylet. Well, I took from that black valise, now lying at the bottom of the lake, a long, dark cloak, that had lost a small corner, a bunch of keys, that fit the doors of Mrs. Rogers' boarding-house, and—a blood-stained, gold-hilted stylet."

There was a murmur of horror from Doctor Austin, from Mr. Hale, even from James Durand.

"But that is not all," went on the detective. "Miss Annin, you will remember, lost her pocket-book. Well—I found it. It contained some money, part of it counterfeit, and a smaller part good; a piece of cloth that matched in size, colour, and quality, the torn corner of Miss Durand's cloak; and several scraps of writing, the writing of Miss Aura herself, the same writing that is contained in the two threatening notes, in the letters returned to her by Arteveldt, in the scrap she sent me alleging it to be from Miss Annin. These scraps speak for themselves."

He took from his pocket a lady's purse, opened it, and took out a little roll of paper.

"I don't know whether they were written to her or to Fordham. I am inclined to think that they were not intended for Miss Annin, and I don't how they came into her possession, as I have not heard her statement yet. They are without signature or address, and evidently refer to the house of Mrs. Rogers. Listen:

"One thousand is all I can raise for you now. In a week I shall have more.

"September 1st."

"This, you see, was written before the robbery. She was bribing some one. We must look to Miss Annin to explain who it was. Here is the next; it is dated September 7th, nearly a week after the robbery of Mr. Durand's desk:

"You can have $5,000 to-night. Then do not fail me. I am growing impatient."

"Here is the next one:

"Do not take that house. I can recommend a better one. Will pay the difference. You can have $1,000—when the change is made."

"This note is dated just two days before the Rogers' house was taken. Here is the last note:

"Delay your preparations. I cannot raise the money now. In ten days can give you $5,000. Do nothing until then."

"And this is dated one week before the murder. Do you see, gentlemen? Aura Durand robbed her adopted father that she might bribe some one. They are about, for some reason, to take a house; she bids them take this particular one, and pays them one thousand dollars for oblig-

ing her. Then she bids them to delay their preparations for ten days; by that time she will have no further use for the house. Now, gentlemen, for our next testimony, we must visit Miss Annin, in her cell, and hear what she will tell us."

Neil Bathurst arose, put back the scraps of paper in the pocket-book, and put that away carefully in his pocket.

Mr. Hale arose and turned to Mr. Durand.

"Mr. Durand, sir," he said, "this seems incomprehensible to me. Is it your wish that this young lady, your adopted daughter be arrested?"

"Mr. Hale," replied Mr. Durand, gravely, "you are Mrs. Arteveldt's business manager, and you can, I think, speak with some authority. If Aura could be arrested on another charge, and could be taken quietly out of the country, to be tried in another land, would you consent to it or aid in bringing it about?"

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Allow me to explain," interrupted Neil Bathurst. "If Aura Durand is arrested here for the murder of Clarence Arteveldt, it will be most unpleasant for Mr. Durand and his lady—and have you ever thought what it must be to Mrs. Arteveldt? She longs, naturally, for revenge upon her son's murderess. But a court of law will drag to light facts concerning that case that will cover his memory with dishonour. Not only will the infamous measures he took to ensnare Lenore Armyn be brought forward, and enlarged upon, but the fact that he was the acknowledged lover, not only of Aura Durand, but of others, be dwelt upon; letters will be produced in court, shameful, unmanly letters, that should never see daylight. Even a man's wealth will not protect him in his grave, and the popular verdict will be, that Clarence Arteveldt after all did not get his full desserts. Even his beautiful wronged wife will testify, because she must; and every word that tells against him will mitigate in favour of his murderess; for she too is beautiful, is a woman, and has been wronged by her victim. If she is tried here, she will be lightly sentenced, or entirely acquitted. You see that I feel free to speak my mind now. My duty is done, the murderess is found. I have never been in sympathy with the murdered man. If Mrs. Arteveldt takes her son's reputation into a court, it will be torn to tatters; she would better let the dead rest."

Mr. Hale looked puzzled. "I acknowledge the truth of what you say," he replied, slowly and very gravely. "But—I do not understand your motive. Do you want this murderess to go free? To escape justice?"

"No!" broke in Mr. Durand, sternly. "He wants justice done; and so do I!"

"I want," said the detective, "to see her where she can do no more mischief; I don't want to trust her to be tried on this charge. Mr. Hale, if I could prove to you that she was guilty of an older and even worse crime, one for which she would surely be punished, would you consent to let her be arrested for that crime? Would you be responsible for Mrs. Arteveldt? I ask you in confidence. But for me she would be under arrest, and out of your reach now. But I deal honourably, she shall not be arrested until you have decided the matter."

"Let us hear Miss Annin," said the wary lawyer. "I will answer you then."

CHAPTER XLIX.

NINA'S STORY.

THEY found the imprisoned lady counterfeiter reading the morning papers, and making the best of the situation, like the female philosopher she was. She was a little discomfited for just a moment, at sight of Mr. Durand. Then she turned to Neil Bathurst.

"Does Mr. Durand know?" she asked.

"Yes. He has come to hear your statement; as also has Mrs. Arteveldt's lawyer and Miss Armyn's guardian. You know why Mr. Ferrars has come."

"Yes," with a short laugh. "He need have no fear; I do not love Aura Durand overmuch, and I do love—myself. Tell me," in a tone so low that it was inaudible to the others, "what has turned that doting old man against Aura?"

"I will tell you," in the same low tone, "and then we must waste no more words. She tried to poison Mrs. Durand."

"Good heavens! The she-fiend! Well, I am ready to begin."

Miss Annin seated herself with as much composure as if in a drawing-room, and said, looking from one questioning face to another,

"Gentlemen, Mr. Bathurst desires me to tell you all that I know concerning the lady whom you call Aura Durand, and I am quite ready to oblige him. He wishes me to be brief, and I will not draw out my story.

"A little more than two years ago I came over from Liverpool in the steamer

D'Orsay," here she cast a sidelong glance at Francis Ferrars; "I am by birth a Canadian, but had lived in Europe since my early girlhood; I was then coming to America, to remain, being," with another glance at Ferrars, "alone in the world. On board this same steamer were Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Durand. You look surprised, Mr. Durand, but I was your fellow-passenger; the state of my finances made it necessary for me to travel second class, and this is why you saw so little of me that you could hardly be expected to remember. I saw Miss Aura, however, and she saw me. Perhaps she looked in scorn upon the woman in the shabby dress. I think she did, but she saw me, and when we met again she remembered. I may have envied her then; but I never dreamed how soon fate was to place her in my power. Well, I arrived in New York, and, being friendless, and without occupation, I attached myself to a variety theatre in that great city.

"One day, while out with a friend, I saw, in the street, the fine young lady who had been my fellow-passenger. It was in a portion of the city not much frequented by the aristocracy, and I thought it might be well to follow her. Presently she was joined by a gentleman, and the two entered a disreputable sort of restaurant. I waited and managed to track the young lady home. The next morning I called upon her; and I freely confess that I never before found my equal in coolness or downright impudence. Then she might (had she been a trifle more resolute) have shaken me off, but she had much at stake; she gave me, as my blackmailing fee, a diamond ring, so magnificent that I have never ventured to wear it.

"Of course, after this, I posted myself as well as I could. I learned that she was Miss Aura Durand, that she resided in Chicago, that she was the only child of wealthy parents. I have since learned that she is only an adopted child. Miss Durand was paying a visit to New York, and after a time she returned home.

"Some months after this I became acquainted with Mr. George Fordham, and—I became very much attached to him. I met him while he was on a business visit to New York, and when he came back to Chicago I accompanied him. One night, at a theatre, I again saw Aura Durand; she was with the same young man who had met her on the street in New York City—Mr. Arteveldt.

"Well, I played my game to the best of my ability, and I instructed Fordham to form the acquaintance of Clarence Arteveldt. This was easy; and before long I had all the information that I needed, enough to put Miss Durand in my power if she valued her reputation. Well, I made her give me large sums at various times. At last my influence over Fordham began to grow less, and then I made a different move. I knew that he aimed at an ostentatious display of respectability, and desired the *entrée* of the first houses. If I could aid him in this, I should not lose him, and I had resolved to keep my lover. So I went to Aura Durand and told her she must take me into the family as her companion and equal. Of course she objected at first, but I knew how to overcome all her objections."

She paused, and laughed, a low, soft laugh.

"It will always cause me to smile, when I think of my sojourn under the same roof with Aura Durand," she said. "She hated me, as only a baffled woman can hate her tormentor. As for me, of course I did not love her, but I had no cause for such hatred as she felt for me. She was my orange whom I squeezed at will. I rather enjoyed her hatred.

"Well, after a time, of course Clarence Arteveldt began to sigh for a new sweetheart, and then the tigress in Aura Durand began to display itself. Contrary to my expectations, Fordham did not profit much by my residence with the Durands. He was wise enough to see that Mr. Durand could not appreciate him. But he came sometimes, and he soon became the chosen friend of Clarence Arteveldt. When Arteveldt began to show signs of dissatisfaction, Aura Durand commenced to hold private interviews with George Fordham, and then I began, in earnest, to hate her.

"I knew Fordham better than he knew me, better than he knew himself. I could see just what was going on in his mind. He would stand as a peacemaker between Aura and Arteveldt, until the latter had entangled himself fatally in some other direction, and then he would present himself as a new candidate for the smiles of the heiress. He held the same power over the girl that I did, and, of course, he knew her for a hypocrite; but what cared he for that—she moved among the proudest, a belle of society; and George Fordham is one of the men of to-day who have a profound regard for the surface of things, and care little about the inner lining. Bah! this is a world of shams! George Fordham, the literary counterfeiter, is, after all, no worse than scores of doctors, lawyers, deacons, and divines. As the acknowledged lover of Miss Aura Durand, he

knew that he would ascend a step or two in the social scale; what if she were a hypocrite, he would use her as he did everything, as a means towards an end.

"When I understood the position I said to myself, 'Now that it is a battle for self alone, they shall not render me powerless;' and for the first time I began to work against George Fordham.

"I goaded and exasperated Aura Durand beyond her powers of endurance, and then she began to negotiate to get rid of me. I told her that I would take ten thousand dollars and leave her. But I never dreamed that she could raise so much money. About this time Fordham became much more kind and attentive than usual; I suspected this sudden growth of affection; but I feigned blindness. After a little he proposed to me to leave Aura, and assist him in the counterfeiting scheme, which these gentlemen," nodding towards Bathurst and Ferrars, "put a summary stop to last night. I accepted the proposition. I may as well state here, that it was in the house of a small counterfeiting gang in New York that I first met Fordham, and—that I have had some—experience in the business."

At this a smile played about the lips of Francis Ferrars.

"The woman is impudence in the flesh," he thought.

"I did not see how Aura was to find the ten thousand dollars," resumed Miss Annin. "But one morning it was discovered that Mr. Durand here had been robbed, and then I was enlightened. I was in the drawing-room when Mr. Bathurst came with Clarence Arteveldt. I knew him instantly, having seen him in New York. Mr. Bathurst, do you remember arresting the diamond-stealing ballet dancer at H——'s theatre?"

The detective nodded.

"Well, I was on the stage at the time. I remembered you, and I trembled for—my ten thousand dollars. When you sent a man to make an ostentatious search of the premises, I scared Aura Durand into remaining upstairs, for I dreaded your cunning. But when we were told that you were coming to dine, I was doubly alarmed; then I told Aura that the expected guest was the very shrewdest of detectives. She is a coward at heart; when she becomes alarmed she flies to her dressing-case and takes a few drops of some strange drug; then she is as brave and as self-possessed as one could wish. I used to despise this practice, for I am by nature courageous; I have lived all my life n more or less danger, and I enjoy it.

"Well, I felt uneasy for a long time about Mr. Bathurst. I did not know when he might renew his investigations, nor in what way. This made me more willing to give up the shelter of the Durand roof. She paid me the ten thousand dollars, and paid lesser sums to Fordham. In one way and another I gained possession of some notes she had written him, and all these I carefully preserved.

"Before I left her came the news of Arteveldt's approaching marriage. She had had stormy scenes with him; had coaxed and threatened, I knew, and finally, when she settled suddenly down to calmness, I might have known what was coming.

"One stormy evening she stole out and went to see Miss Armyn. She thought I was sick, in my own room, but I followed her, and I knew where she went. After that visit came her sudden wonderful calmness. The taking of the house next door to that of the bride and groom to be was all her work, managed through Fordham. They did not intend that I should know how she was managing affairs, bribing him to delay preparations, and arranging things to suit her convenience. Fordham thought, and so did I, that she chose this house for us in order to have a chance to watch the newly-married pair. I looked upon it as a jealous woman's whim. We never dreamed of the tragedy so soon to be enacted.

"One day I went to look at the house, and I brought the keys home with me. I went into Aura's room for a litttle while, with the keys in my cloak-pocket. When I went to my own room they were missing. I looked, and I inquired, but no one had seen such keys. Aura was out more or less that day; and the next morning she came to my room, bringing my keys. She had found them behind the curtain, she said. I did not believe this; but I said nothing. A day or two after, while in her room, some packages were brought in. With my usual freedom I pounced upon them to examine their contents, as they were evidently 'dry goods' of some sort. One bundle contained a long dark grey waterproof cloak. I wondered at her for buying such a thing, and being a judge of cloths, pronounced it shoddy."

At the mention of this cloak the men cast significant glances at each other.

"We were to have been in our house a week before the wedding, but, as I said, Aura caused Fordham to delay. We were all to witness the ceremony, of course, but the night before the wedding Aura contrived to sprain her ankle, so, of course,

she remained at home ; and Mr. and Mrs. Durand and myself went, taking with us Miss Aura's 'regrets.'

"I was delivering these regrets after the most approved fashion, when the bride put her hand upon my arm and said, in a tone audible only to myself, and giving me such a queer look as she said it : 'I have not the pleasure of Miss Durand's acquaintance ; nevertheless, tell her that I trust her injury can be amended—in time.' I knew she did not refer to Aura's lameness, and I instantly connected the speech with Aura's secret visit to her. But I could not understand it then. When the news came that Clarence Arteveldt had been murdered, it was still more of a mystery, just for a moment, then I understood it. I remembered her words, as who does not who was present at the bridal supper? And I knew that her message meant this : 'She would leave Clarence Arteveldt, and Aura Durand might console him if she could.' From the first I did not believe that Lenore Armyn had killed him. From the first I suspected Aura. I went to her room ; I was the first to tell her of the murder, and—she baffled me. I could not help but see that she was shocked at the news. I should know what acting is, and she was not acting. I could explain it to myself in only one way : Perhaps she had taken an overdose of her drug, and committed the deed in a state of temporary insanity. But I did not believe this—I did not know what to believe.

"The keys of the house were in the hands of Mrs. Rogers. I went to her and got them, and the day of the funeral I visited the house—our house, you know. I went through it, and up to the very roof. A part of our 'kit' had been smuggled in and stored away in the attic rooms. I found one of these attic doors ajar, and I knew that no door had been left thus by one of our people. Then I began to look about me carefully. The stairway had been partitioned off, and so was dark. I opened the attic doors, and last got up on a box and unfastened the trap in the roof, lifting it up, and letting in a flood of light. The box on which I stood was directly under the trap, and looking down at it I saw hanging to a nail a little piece of cloth. I knew it ; it was like the grey waterproof lately bought by Aura Durand. One corner had caught on the nail and torn off. She must have been terribly eager or excited not to notice it. My theory is that she tore it in coming back through the trap after committing the deed. I looked closely all about, and on the stairs, and in the room where lay our counterfeiting tools, I found small drops of white wax, as if dropped from a wax taper. Miss Durand will have nothing but wax lights in her rooms.

"I think I have told you enough. There is no need to ask why we did not denounce Aura Durand. We might have got the reward, but we could not produce our proofs without exposing our business ; and —we knew we could bleed Aura to any extent. She, or some one, contrived, recently, to rob me of my purse, containing the scrap of cloth and the notes to Fordham, about the house ; so I cannot show you these."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that score," said Neil Bathurst, with more brusqueness than was usual to him. "Your purse, with all it contained, is safe in my possession."

She turned upon him with a cool stare.

"What a man you are!" she exclaimed. "If I am set at liberty again I shall keep the width of the continent between us, if I have any secrets to hide."

"As doubtless you would have," retorted Neil, smiling in spite of himself at her matchless audacity.

"Yes ; as doubtless I should," she replied, coolly. "Shall you appear against me in court, Mr. Bathurst?"

"Assuredly."

"And you, Mr. Ferrars?"

"As a witness on this case, yes," answered Ferrars, significantly.

"Will they let me see Fordham, do you think?" she asked, again turning to Bathurst.

"I think not, madam. The doctor says Fordham will live to serve out a term in the penitentiary."

"I'm glad of that," said this remarkable woman. "I prefer to have him near me, even there."

When they were once more seated in Mr. Hale's office, that gentleman turned to Bathurst and exclaimed,

"Good heavens ! sir ; do you not suppose that Miss Durand will take fright when she hears of this woman's arrest, and effect her escape !"

"Miss Durand is under close surveillance, sir. If she attempts to escape, she will be promptly stopped," replied the detective.

Mr. Hale sat for a long time in thoughtful silence, and then he again looked up.

"You intimated that another grave charge could be brought against her," he said. "I agree with Mr. Durand, such a woman should have no light punishment. What will be the probable punishment for this other crime?"

Bathurst pointed to Francis Ferrars.

"She will be tried in his country," he replied; "ask him."

The lawyer turned his questioning face towards the English detective.

"What will be her punishment if she is tried in England?" he asked.

With an iron look upon his face, Francis Ferrars answered,

"Death!"

"Then, in Heaven's name, let her be taken to England," cried lawyer Hale. "Bathurst, what is the crime?"

"Do you remember my mention of Jocelyn's search for Elise Schwartz, who killed her husband and his sister?" asked Bathurst.

"Yes."

"Well—Aura Durand is Elise Schwartz."

"Good God! Man, don't lose any more time; don't stop to explain, go and seize that woman fiend."

"Wait!" said Neil Bathurst. "Elise Schwartz is ready for another crime; we must give her a little more rope."

CHAPTER L.

THE CONFESSION OF A MURDERESS.

It is midnight. In the splendid mansion of James Durand all is quiet; as quiet as earth, and sea, and sky, before the first breaking of the hurricane. Such a strange quiet! In the housekeeper's room sits Mrs. Richards, silent, motionless, alert. The room is very dark; the door is locked, and she sits near it, listening. In the rooms of "Cousin Charles" something still more strange might be seen. Yes, seen; for there is some light, a very little, here.

On the bed in the sleeping room lies the young man who has so suddenly deposed Aura Durand. The light is too dim to enable one to distinguish his features, but the blonde hair and the blonde whiskers are unmistakable; they belong to "Cousin Charles." He lies very still. He must be sleeping soundly. Beyond the bed is an open door, the door of the dressing-room, but it is dark, very dark, within. Nothing can be seen from the dimly-lighted chamber, and yet—something is there. Between the door of entrance and the bed is a lofty window, heavily curtained. A moment the curtains are drawn aside, and the face of a man looks out, then they fall together in sombre folds, and all is still.

Five minutes, ten, and then the outer door opens softly, slowly, and a figure with loose flowing blonde hair and trailing dark garments glides in. The figure turns, closes the door cautiously, and glides straight to the bedside. It is a woman—it is Aura Durand. Straight to the bedside she goes, and then she takes something from her pocket; there is the slightest possible clinking of glass, a glimmer of something white in her hand, something white which she bends down and lays upon the half-averted face of the sleeper; and then there is a strong, sickening odour of chloroform in the room. She has adjusted the white thing carefully, and now she turns and seats herself in an easy-chair not far from the bed. Great heavens! is this woman iron, or marble, or ice, that she can sit there beside her victim? She sits calm, immovable; moment after moment passes, and at last she rises and goes again to the bed. Again she lifts the handkerchief. Again it is saturated with the deadly liquid, and laid upon the face of the sleeper. Again she seats herself and waits. After a time she seems satisfied with her work; life must be extinct under that long suffocation; she rises, once more she goes to the bed and removes the handkerchief from the still face.

"*Elise Schwartz!* I arrest you in the name of the law."

What has happened? has she gone mad?

A strong hand closes upon her arm, a stern voice is sounding in her ear. Merciful heavens! the room is full of people! the lights are turned on; it is like a transformation scene, only that she holds in her hands the hideous evidences of her guilt, and there upon the bed lies—*that!*

Is she going mad? everything reels about her; everything is seen through a vapour; everything taunts and tantalizes her; she hears voices that seem distant, and then near; the lights dance to and fro, everything seems unreal, save that clasp upon her arm, that voice in her ear, and *that* which lies upon the bed.

After a time the mist clears away, the voices resolve themselves into sounds that she can comprehend. The forms stand out distinct and recognizable, and she is aware that Mr. Durand, Mr. Hale, Neil Bathurst, and a man she does not know, are standing opposite, on the other side of the bed. Then she knows that a tall strong man stands beside her, she hears again the words:

"Elise Schwartz, you are my prisoner."

She realizes that all is lost; she has been hunted down. With a cry, like that of some wild animal, she turns upon her captor, and strives to wrench herself from his grasp, but it is useless. She ceases to struggle and stands sullenly beside the bed; she will say no word, the name that has fallen from the lips of her captor has told her that words are useless; she is

Elise Schwartz, and she has been hunted down.

"Girl!" Mr. Durand moves forward, "the mercy you have had for others I will show to you. I give you up to the hands of the law you have outraged. Expect nothing from me save that I will do my utmost to bring to justice one who would have been, but for Neil Bathurst, my wife's murderess. Robert Jocelyn, the detective, in whose hands you are now, has followed you from the scene of your earlier crimes; he shall take you back to England; you have no friends here."

The captive shivered under the hand that restrained her, but she said no word, and Neil Bathurst moved a step nearer.

"Before you go hence you can render yourself one shade less black in the eyes of those who have known you, if you will," he said. "You have been hunted down; we hold the proof that you are the murderess of your husband and his sister, Rebecca Schwartz; that you have robbed your friend and protector, the man who, above all others, you should have held sacred; and that you have attempted the life of his wife; we know that three times before to-night have you crept to this door, prepared to do what you have done to-night; but Charles Durand was not ready to cease to exist, and so you found no access. To-night Charles Durand has ceased to be, but you are his destroyer only in intent. I am the one who has wiped out the existence of Charles Durand, together with the necessity for him. See!"

He bends forward; he takes her hand; he draws her to the bedside; then he draws down the sheets, pulls at the blonde hair and beard, and she sees that the thing of terror is but a plaster head, adorned with a flaxen wig and beard.

Again that strange cry escapes her lips; she realizes how she has been surrounded by enemies and undermined, with her eyes open.

"Your plans were well laid," continued Neil Bathurst; "but I suspected you at the time you robbed Mr. Durand in order to bribe Nina Annin, and I have been on your track constantly since you killed Clarence Arteveldt."

Ah! that has told. She throws up her hands and utters a shriek of agony and terror.

"We know all about that, too," he goes on, mercilessly. "All your letters and his, all your forgeries, are in my possession. The valise you flung into the lake contained worthless rags; your cloak, your famous little dagger, your keys, even your stolen jewels, are in my hands. Nina Annin has been arrested, and has confessed all; told all that she knows concerning you. Your lover was false and you killed him. Will you make a statement, a confession of that crime, or shall that help to turn the scale against you when you are tried for your life as your husband's murderess?"

With sudden fury she wrenches herself from the grasp of Rob Jocelyn, who has kept a detaining hand upon her, fearing lest she do herself an injury. Her eyes flash defiance; some thought seems goading her to madness.

"Yes," she cries, "you shall have the statement you so much desire. My career is closed. I see that; I feel it, and I am so young yet. I am Elise Schwartz, you say. Can you tell me who I was before that? What could you expect from a child flung to a band of gipsies; left to grow wild among them, with no mother, no father, no name? For years I knew no other life; but I knew I was not a gypsy. I envied every richly-dressed woman I saw. I longed to dwell in houses, and tarry in cities not to move on, and on, and on. One day a fine lady saw me, and she took me with her to be her maid. She had wealth and many lovers. We lived in gay Paris, and I nearly went mad with delight at the life we led. I watched, I listened, I copied, I learned fast—fast. One day, when I was barely fifteen, My Lady discovered that I was a rival to be feared, and she sent me away. We were in London then, and I was at a loss. Well, I met that old Jew, and he fell in love with my face; in spite of his sister's entreaties he married me. I knew that he was rich, but I did not know how mean he was.

"I expected dresses, jewels; I had nothing, just nothing, and I was watched like a prisoner by that ugly old woman. Life was terrible to me then—terrible! I longed for Paris, for the old life; for music, and laughter, and light. I endured it for two long years, and then—I killed them. In the city lived an old gipsy fortune-teller, who had done so many evil things that she had been banished from her tribe, the same tribe that I left; she knew me, when we met in London. She was skilled in many dark ways; she would do anything for a little money; she taught me the use of the little stiletto. It was to her I fled after the thing was done. She dyed my hair, she procured me cosmetics, she sheltered me for a time, but I feared her and I fled. I fled to Paris, and there I disguised myself more effectually. My dark hair was made yellow, my almost swarthy complexion blonde; I sacrificed my long eyelashes, and dyed them light; I partially shaved my dark brows, and

changed their shape; and my teeth, that were large, and too easy of identification, I had drawn out, every one, and a false set of an entirely different shape and size made. Then I was ready to defy detection.

"Fortune seemed to smile upon me. Mr. and Mrs. Durand met me; they had buried their daughter in a strange land. I told a most pathetic story, and they adopted me. You know the rest; I came here; in New York I met Clarence Arteveldt. I was young, and in all my changeful life I had never loved. But I loved him madly, unto death. When I learned of his falsity, of his coming marriage, I went mad. I appealed to him. It was useless. I visited Miss Armyn by stealth, and she swore that nothing but death should separate her from my lover. I had my dagger in my bosom; for a moment I was tempted to spring upon her and bury it in her heart. Then another thought came. I would wait and be revenged on both. I bowed my head and went out from her presence; but I was thinking, thinking.

"I knew nothing of her hatred for Clarence. I thought she loved him. I laid my plans—you know what they were—I did not attend the wedding; I could not, and so—I knew nothing of the bride's flight. When I stole into that still house, with my dagger in my hand, I was as firm as adamant."

She moves a step forward, her eyes are fixed on vacancy, she seems to be re-acting that horrible scene.

"I went on with firm, still tread, and nerves like steel. I reached the bridal chamber; I had prepared myself to force an entance, but the door was unlocked. Softly I stole in, the lights were very dim. I could just see two forms lying side by side. I drew near to the bride's pillow; beside it was a dainty stand with a basket of snowy flowers upon it. I bent down—ah, how calm I was!—I put one finger on the forehead, for I could not see clearly where to strike; I felt the vein of the temple, and there I drove my dagger home. Then I went back as I came. Nothing but death could part them, she had said. Death had parted them; death from my hand. Now who would dare take Clarence from me? Oh, God! oh, God!"

She throws her arms aloft; again, as on the night when Nina Annin broke to her the news, she writhes in agony. When she speaks again it is in a strange, hollow, half whisper, horrible to hear.

"All the next day I kept my room. I saw no one, heard nothing. Then she came, that hated woman. Oh! how I wish I had killed her then! She told me that Clarence Arteveldt had been murdered. How did I live? How did I? Hear me, men! I feel now as I did then, as if I were going mad! *I had meant to kill Lenore Armyn!* His wife! By the memory of the man who died in her stead, I swear it! Take me where you will; do with me as you will. I have been guilty, but I regret nothing save that blow."

Again she flings her arms aloft and then falls heavily forward, to be caught by Rob Jocelyn, while the others stand horror-stricken by her last words. What perils has not Lenore Armyn escaped! They raise the prostrate form and lay her upon the bed, where now a corpse might have been; and then Mrs. Richards glides forward; she has been near at hand from the very first. When Aura is at last restored to consciousness, all her fierceness, all her courage, all her strength has deserted her. Cool, audacious Nina Annin might well despise her now. But vile though she be, Nina Annin is no murderess. She who was known to the gay world as Aura Durand, goes forth from the mansion where she has reigned a queen, never to be known as Aura Durand again; nevermore to cross, or desecrate that threshold. In the grey of morning Rob Jocelyn takes her away. Abject, sullen, hopeless, she goes, to be known only as "Elise Schwartz, the murderess," until death shall claim her.

CHAPTER LI.

A REUNION AT GENTLEMAN JEFF'S.

ONCE again, and for the last time, let us visit the rooms of Gentleman Jeff. When, as the result of Francis Ferrars' strategic entrance into the gambler's holy of holies, Lenore Armyn had become fully convinced that she was not the helpless, hunted, friendless being she had believed herself to be, she became all at once a model of meekness, and declared herself willing and ready to be guided by the advice of her friends. What should she do now? To which Francis Ferrars had replied,

"Miss Armyn—Lady Lenore—you are safe—from all save annoyance; but until the real murderess is found, it will not be prudent to appear in public. For a little longer you must remain in seclusion. I will find you a safe and pleasant abiding place for the few days that must intervene before you may stand in the highest places, and face the world; unless you can name a place that will not be new and strange, and that you would prefer."

Then Lenore had turned to Gentleman Jeff, saying,

"Sir, are you tired of me? Have I wearied your good mother? Will my absence be a relief to you?"

"Miss Armyn!" said the gambler, in amazement. "The protection I have offered you is not of the best, but it is as freely yours as the best should be. As for my mother, let her speak for herself."

"It is a pleasure to me to be with you, Miss Armyn," said the old lady, earnestly. "I almost regret your good fortune."

Lenore turned to Ferrars.

"I will stay here, Mr. Ferrars," she said, quietly.

"Here!" exclaimed the Englishman, in some surprise. "But——"

"I shall stay here," interrupted Lenore, suddenly forgetting her meekness. "When I came to this gentleman as a fugitive, with a price set on my head, he never hesitated for one moment; his house had brought my trouble upon me, he said, although he took an involuntary part in that shameful deed, and now his house should shelter me so long as his doors stood intact, and he had strength to stand between me and danger. Then he went straight and brought his mother to me. He might have given me up to the law and claimed a rich reward; instead he has treated me as if I were an empress. You say that I am no longer the hunted, friendless fugitive who sought his protection; that I am heiress to a vast fortune and lofty name. You call me the Lady Lenore. Well, Lady Lenore will remain the guest of Gentleman Jeff, and if she should live to dine at the table of princes and kings she will never have a host that she will honour more."

The Englishman felt the rebuke her words implied.

"You are right," he said. "And—you are a true aristocrat."

So while the net had been closing about Aura Durand, Lenore remained the guest of the prince of gamblers. Francis Ferrars came from time to time, and they talked of her future. Finally, Lenore wrote a letter to Doctor Austin, instructing him to be ready to come to her at any moment; and upon receipt of a telegram from a certain Francis Ferrars, to come to the city, bringing her mother's papers with him. It must be confessed that Lenore's meekness was of short duration; her courage was too high, and her heart too strong, to be kept long under a cloud that had so much of brightness behind it; she began to feel glad to be alive once more; to rejoice because of her youth and her health, with the unreasoning exultation that youth and health and innocence brings. She sent a half penitent, wholly characteristic message to Neil Bathurst, and his reply was equally characteristic. Until there remained not the shadow of an excuse for a flitting, he should obstinately refuse to give Miss Armyn the flying impetus his presence always seemed to furnish. He should hold himself aloof.

And Lenore had laughed and frowned, and began to think a great deal about this independent young detective, and to look forward with some eagerness to a meeting with him.

The morning that followed the arrest of Elise Schwartz saw Doctor Austin and Francis Ferrars in close conversation with Lenore; after which the girl was left alone to read some papers of her mother's. Mr. Hale had reported that Mrs. Arteveldt had driven out of the city for the day; and so the next step, the last step to be taken before Lenore should be finally and fully cleared in the eyes of the world, must be postponed until evening. Upon being informed of this, Lenore said,

"I have no wish to see Mrs. Arteveldt; she can hardly care to see me. But to you who have been, who are, my best and truest friends, everything is due. I will read my mother's papers, and then I will tell you all that I know of my own, all that I can of my mother's history. Bring Mrs. Arteveldt's lawyer too. Mr. Hale can make such notes as he chooses for her enlightenment."

So to-day, a little after the hour of noon, Lenore, Doctor Austin, Gentleman Jeff, and his mother sat in the gambler's splendid parlour, chatting quietly and waiting. Presently steps were heard without, and then the door opened, admitting Rob Jocelyn, Charles Ruthven, and two veiled ladies, who, at sight of Lenore, sprang forward with little ecstatic cries, and throwing back their veils, revealed the faces of Mrs. Ruthven and Kate Seaton.

After their greeting was over, which was not for some moments, Kate presented Robert Jocelyn, and Lenore frankly extended her hand, saying,

"Oh, I know a great deal about you, Mr. Jocelyn, and I intend to appropriate all the friendship you have to spare. Mr. Ferrars has told me how you have kept your hand upon my enemy, Jason Bradwardine. Oh, how little I dreamed what strong friends, what brave defenders I might have had long ago."

Then she introduced the new-comers to Doctor Austin, Gentleman Jeff and his mother. A few moments more and Francis

Ferrars, Neil Bathurst, and Mr. Hale appeared. As Neil Bathurst approached Lenore, she looked up in his face, saying gravely, but with a mirthful gleam in her eyes,

"Mr. Bathurst, are you prepared to shake hands—and bury the hatchet?"

"I don't know," retorted Neil, with even more solemnity. "I have no faith in you—not a particle. In a few moments we shall be staring blankly at each other, and you will have gone down through the floor, or up through the ceiling, or out at the keyhole. Have you got seven-league boots, or an enchanted carpet?"

"No," laughed Lenore; "but I have a very active pair of feet. I feel quite proud to have so dodged Bathurst, the detective. I shall boast of it as something worth having done."

"Of course you will," with a comical glance at Doctor Austin, who stood near, laughing at this badinage. "You and Doctor Austin will chuckle over it together. But I'll have nothing more to do with you. If you run away I will laugh at the folly of the man who tries to catch you. I won't cope with an *ignis fatuus*."

There were more jests, and then some sober conversation. The detectives told of the manner in which they arrested the counterfeiters. And then Francis Ferrars described the scene of the previous night, when Elise Schwartz was stopped in her career of crime. After this there ensued a long, awesome silence, which was broken at last by Lenore.

"How strangely fate has worked," she said, in low, grave tones. "My life has been sought, again and again. Yes, I believe she did intend that death-blow for me. If Miss Annin has told you of Aura Durand's visit to me, then, of course, I may speak of it—may feel released from my promise. What she, this murderess, said of that visit was true. I did say that only death could interfere with my marriage to Clarence Arteveldt. Now I understand the look she gave me, and then the sudden drooping of the form as she turned and went out. The look was intended for my death-warrant, and then her sudden change of manner was inspired by prudence. She wished to deceive me into thinking her simply crushed and hopeless; and I did think so. She looked very lovely and very pathetic that day; but I was too bitter to pity any one, least of all myself; and she has committed so many crimes. Heavens, how horrible! While her hand was stained with the blood of the son, she has been the chosen friend of the mother."

"Yes," said Kate Seaton, with a sudden flash of the eyes, "I call it retribution upon Mrs. Arteveldt. I have heard those two talk of finding and dealing with Lenore, until my blood has fairly boiled. And I hated Aura Durand from the very first. I promise you a scene, Mr. Hale, when you come to tell Mrs. Arteveldt to-night that she cannot wreak her vengeance upon Lenore Armyn;" then turning suddenly to Ferrars, "do you know any more concerning that strange meddler?" she asked.

"He is well watched, Miss Seaton; that man was Bradwardine," replied the English detective.

And this made it necessary to tell to to Lenore, Mr. Hale, and the other uninitiated, the last piece of rascality attempted by Jason Bradwardine.

Suddenly Lenore turned to Neil Bathurst. "I have made you an enemy," she said, regretfully. "Mr. Bathurst, that man will harm you if he can. Why did you spare him that day?"

"Miss Armyn," replied Neil, gravely, "I spared him because, if arrested, he might have set officers on your track. I did not expect that you would leave me as you did, for I tried to make my manner convey to you the truth that I was not, and would not be, your gaoler."

Lenore flushed hotly, and sat in silence for a moment, then she said, almost hesitatingly,

"I will do you and myself justice, Mr. Bathurst, and tell you what I thought that day. When I learned who you were, I said to myself, 'This detective is in search of me, and has traced me in time to save me from Jason Bradwardine, and death; nevertheless it is his duty to arrest me, and his manner implies that he does not wish to do this. If he lets me go it will injure him, and I shall only escape to fall into other hands.' While I was thinking this, we crossed the street just below. Suddenly I thought of this gentleman," nodding towards Gentleman Jeff, "and I remembered how kind and honourable he had looked on that day, that was the beginning of my troubles. Then I thought of escaping; if I could get out of the carriage I could dodge behind that green door very soon. I acted upon this impulse, and Gentleman Jeff more than verified my good opinion of him. You had rescued me, Mr. Bathurst, and I could not have permitted you to compromise yourself because of me. Of course I did not dream that you or any one could remove the charge against me by placing the guilt where it belonged."

She paused for a moment and then resumed,

"I may as well tell you, or those of you who have not yet learned it, how I arranged my flight after that mockery of a marriage. I will not now or hereafter speak of Clarence Arteveldt; I have not a forgiving spirit, and although he has expiated his sin, I have not forgotten, and cannot forget, my wrong, and the suffering it has brought upon me. From the time the idea first seized me of marrying him, and abandoning him at the altar, I never faltered in my purpose once. I wrote to Doctor Austin, and he came to the city; I met him privately and told him a small part of the truth. He knew that there was a mystery in the life of my mother; he knew that she had lived and died haunted by a great fear. He knew that I did not know all this mystery, but that my knowledge extended beyond his. He had promised my mother to act for me without question. And when I put him to the test he kept his word. I told him that there was a person in the city who had some power over me, and who would use it to my injury; that I feared that I had not acted in accordance with my mother's wishes; that I had not kept myself in the seclusion she had advised. That there was another strong reason why I wished to vanish suddenly from among my friends, a reason which I could not then confide to him. If he would aid me and ask no questions, he should always know where I was, and all of my movements. Of course my obstinacy gained me my point. Doctor Austin arranged that I was to be received at Doctor Burton's asylum. That was my idea; I thought I could not have a safer retreat. When I left the supper-room, clad in all my bridal white, chance favoured me; not one of the servants or waiting coachmen saw me as I ran to the nearest corner and sprang into the carriage. Doctor Austin himself sat on the box, and within he had placed a valise containing a dark, plain dress. Before we reached the asylum I had exchanged my bridal dress for the dark one, and Doctor Austin himself hardly knew that I had made an exchange. I had previously sent a small trunk to my new retreat, and as soon as I could do so I burned my bridal finery. I lived a very quiet life there for three months. I had drawn on the doctor for enough money to carry me through, should an emergency make it necessary for me to go elsewhere; and when Mr. Bathurst appeared, and I fled to the protection of the ballet mistress, I found that money was a friend indeed.

"I had such perfect liberty there," resumed Lenore, after a moment's pause, "that I doubt if I could have proved myself to have been in the asylum all night. It was easy enough for any one, not locked in their rooms, to go in and out at Doctor Burton's at all hours."

CHAPTER LII.

LADY LENORE.

"And now," said Lenore, drawing her chair closer to that occupied by Kate Seaton, "I must tell you, as briefly as I can, a little about myself, and something of what is contained in my mother's journal and letters, especially the letters written shortly before her death, and separately entrusted to Doctor Austin."

She paused for a moment, as if considering, and then resumed:

"I will only say of my childhood, that it has, as it now dwells in my memory, many strange and distinct lights and shades. I can remember, what seems now like fragments of dreams, the accents of foreign tongues, the vivacious French, the guttural German, the musical Italian, and always, almost, the stately English. I remember having wakened, oh! so many, many nights, to find my mother sobbing over my pillow, and murmuring, in broken accents, words that conveyed to my mind the idea that she was a deeply wronged and persecuted woman, and that in some way I was connected with the cause of all her woe.

"I am told that in my veins flows a mixture of the blood of Italian and English nobility, and the French common people. And I have lived long enough in America to be very glad and proud of that admixture of common place blood, especially when I reflect upon what the blue blood has done for my mother and father. However, I presume that to this mixture of races I owe my peculiarities of temper and disposition. I think I must have been a very uncomfortable child. I was constantly looking about us for the cause of my mother's sorrow, for my little mind was unable to comprehend a woe the cause for which was hidden, or buried, from sight. I used to clench my baby fists in wrath, and I waged a continuous warfare upon servants, and strangers, and friends; although of the latter I can remember very few. I can recall what seemed to me a most wonderful experience, a long, long voyage over an interminable waste of waters, during which my poor mamma was unaccountably ill, and I was the most active, energetic, and healthful of small tribulations.

"Next I can recall a sojourn in a place

where everything was strange, very strange, and where our charming English was very oddly accented. I think my mother must have been very ill there. Then one day she snatched me in her arms as if to shelter me from some terrible danger; and there was a sudden flitting, another journey that seemed to me tedious and interminable, and then came Fairlie.

"As I grew older, my mother taught me never to speak of the voyage across the ocean, and of the foreign lands that seemed like the recollections of a dream. I must be an American. I was never permitted to speak of that other home we had known for a little time. I was by nature fearless, curious, and difficult to deal with; and I know that my poor mother's wrong, had made her morbidly sensitive. She had the Italian exaggeration of language, and in exhorting me to prudence, to caution, and to obedience, in my younger days, she alluded to her past in such vague, mysterious language, and with such a look in her eyes, that I became possessed, haunted, by a vague terror. And there is no terror like that which we cannot comprehend. I knew that we were exiles from some other land, and I began to believe, as I grew up, that because of some crime, or treason, on the part of my father, we had been compelled to flee the country. My mother taught me that we were in constant danger, and she described to me the man Jason Bradwardine, imploring me to be ever watchful, ever cautious, and to fear this man always, because he sought my life.

"When she believed herself dying, my mother called me to her, and told me that I would soon be alone and surrounded by danger; that men, strong and high in power, sought my destruction; that I stood between one of these men and the position that he longed for, and that my life would be sacrificed if I ever fell into his hands. That I was, to the other of these men, a hated thing, a symbol of his own misery and future downfall. She told me that, to escape from these men and from dangers to both of us, she had brought me across the sea. She said that, even then, these enemies might be aware of our hiding-place, and waiting only for a suitable time to spring upon us, or upon me. 'Fear curiosity; shun strangers,' my mother said. 'If they set out to find you they will move earth and heaven. One of these men, Jason Bradwardine, crossed the ocean once to destroy you; you are growing to womanhood now, and will be doubly dangerous in his eyes. Live retired; baffle all inquirers; shun large public assemblies, and beware of detectives; they are the means often employed by bad men to hunt down their victims.'

"I implored her to tell me all, not to leave me in the dark, concerning this shadow upon my life, and she replied that to tell me would only increase my danger, that ignorance was my best and only safeguard.

"As her last hour drew near, she exacted from me a vow of the most solemn nature. I was to conceal all that I knew of my past; never to examine the papers she left behind, unless some movement on the part of my enemies revealed to me my identity and made further enlightenment necessary. I was never to leave America, unless the time should come when I was assured that my foes were powerless to harm me, and ever and always I was to avoid inquiry, to shun and flee from any one suspected of being a detective, or investigator of any sort, and never, by any act, to bring myself forward conspicuously so as to become a marked personage in any community. She wished that I should leave Fairlie, after her death; she believed that I would be safer among strangers.

"Last, she had left all her papers, and the control of her little fortune, in the hands of Doctor Austin. He is the only being my mother fully trusted. She left with him, too, a letter, which was to be placed in my hands on my twenty-fifth birthda; but, if I ever stood in peril; if any great danger menaced me, or fell upon me—any danger which I could not avert or avoid, because I could not comprehend it—then I was to have the letter sooner; have it at the time of need.

"Well, I have learned through others who I am, and what it was that my mother feared, and Mr. Ferrars tells me that all her life she has been labouring under a sad, sad delusion. She had married the only son of Sir Hillary Massinger; married him against the wishes and without the knowledge of Sir Hillary. Jason Bradwardine had pretended a warm friendship for my mother and father, and they trusted him; but he was the serpent of their Eden. My mother fled to America, believing that my father had deserted her at the command of Sir Hillary Massinger. She believed herself abandoned, and that they, my father and grandfather, would seek to steal me from her. For years she trusted Jason Bradwardine; he was her only adviser, and, of course, he contrived to keep from her any knowledge of her husband, or how it fared with him. But, after we came to America—which she did against his will—she found him out. He sent an emissary

over from England to steal me away. Then my mother, who, from her husband, from Jason Bradwardine, from every one who knew Sir Hillary Massinger, had learned to think him stern, bitter, implacable, and always her enemy, believed that this old man so hated her and her child that he had bought over Jason Bradwardine. She knew that my father could not set himself free and marry again, if he would, and she knew that Jason Bradwardine was the next of kin, and she believed that he hoped to outlive my father, and succeed to the Massinger title and estates."

Her voice broke as she paused to regain her composure.

"From Mr. Ferrars I learn that my father died years ago," she resumed, in a tremulous tone. "That he was deluded and betrayed, not by his father, but by Jason Bradwardine. Sir Hillary received an anonymous letter telling him of his son's marriage; he went to the place where the letter informed him that he should find that son. He did not find him, but he found my mother, and they had a stormy interview. My father was absent; he did not return at the time appointed. And then came Jason Bradwardine with a false tale. My father had returned to Hillary Hall, he said; he had deserted his wife and child. I suppose my mother nearly went mad then; she fled from her home, that had been so happy, and no one, save Jason Bradwardine, knew where she went. When my father came back we were gone; his wife, his child. He searched for us, fruitlessly; he would not be reconciled to his father—and—finally—he died. His life wasted; himself a victim. And my mother—she died, believing him false. Ah, heavens! to think of these two blighted lives, and then to think that Jason Bradwardine, the man who wrought all this misery, still walks the earth. Mr. Bathurst," turning suddenly towards Neil, and changing as suddenly her look and tone, "I wish he had moved that day when I held his own pistol at his head." It was a startling climax to her sad recital, and it seemed to arouse her hearers from the sorrowful silence caused by this pitiful story of past wrongs and past mistakes. It brought that past straight down to the present, where action was possible.

"Miss Armyn," said Neil, earnestly, "now that you are safe, we have nothing to do, save to hunt this villain to his ruin."

"Oh! don't lose any time in doing it," broke in Kate Seaton; "he is dangerous to your safety and to Lenore's, Mr. Bathurst. How he must hate you both!"

They had all aroused themselves from their attitudes of listening, and now Mr. Hale arose and approached Lenore.

"My Lady," he said, gravely, "these three detectives have done a grand work. They have crushed a strong case of circumstantial evidence, and cleared your name before the world. They have brought to justice the cleverest and most dangerous murderess that the annals of crime ever recorded. They have broken up a gang of counterfeiters, composed of the most difficult class of criminals that justice ever dealt with; men who hold reputable positions, and cloak their real trade under an honest outward seeming, and honest associations. I think you can safely trust them to deal with this one villain. As for yourself, from this hour you stand acquitted; you have nothing to fear from Mrs. Arteveldt, and you have a splendid future before you—the future of a peeress of England. I congratulate you."

Lenore looked up quickly.

"As Lenore Armyn, I thank you," she said. "As Lady Lenore Massinger, I have nothing to thank any one for; I am not proud of the title; I am not sure that I shall ever claim it. Sir Hillary Massinger was not so bad as my mother believed him. But I do not forget that his pride and hardness of heart caused the life-long misery of both my parents.

"But, Lady Lenore," interposed Neil Bathurst, "you will not render worse than useless the work of Mr. Ferrars; you will no longer conceal your identity?"

"No! Mr. Bathurst," replied Lenore, turning to him and then to Francis Ferrars. "Mr. Ferrars may tell Sir Hillary Massinger that his granddaughter is found; but he must tell him too how she was found, and that she knows the story of her mother's wrongs."

"Oh, Lenore," exclaimed Kate Seaton, "I can't call you Lady Lenore—not yet—we love you best; don't go back to England!"

"I won't—not yet, Katie," replied Lenore, "I would rather have you, and Mrs. Ruthven, and Doctor Austin, and Gentleman Jeff all of you my friends in need, for friends for aye, than to go among those proud people across the water, and be Lady Lenore."

Gentleman Jeff moved forward, and bowed before her.

"Lady Lenore," he said, "this is an honour that never yet befell a gambler. Not only have I your regard, little as I deserve it, but here, where only gamblers came before, I have entertained ladies, and the men whom more than all others

I respect and honour; these brother detectives, who have extended to me a friendly hand; and these upright professional gentlemen who do not scorn a gambler."

With one of her old-time impulsive gestures, Lenore extended her hand to Gentleman Jeff, and said,

"How dare you, sir! You, the peer of any man! Lawyers and doctors are very well," with a whimsical glance towards Doctor Austin; "but when you write to my noble grandfather, Mr. Ferrars, tell him that Lady Lenore thinks that the best men are gamblers and detectives, and that there is no prouder title than that of Gentleman Jeff."

CHAPTER LIII.

BRADWARDINE'S FATE.

"MRS. ARTEVELDT, we have found Lenore Armyn."

These words, spoken by Neil Bathurst, brought Mrs. Arteveldt to her feet as if startled by a bugle blast. She was sitting in the drawing-room with Kate Seaton near her, and the detective and Mr. Hale had just presented themselves. She had been prepared for a visit from Mr. Hale, but she had not expected this news, for Kate Seaton had been mute on the subject, and there was no one else to enlighten her.

"At last!" she cried, her eyes flashing with excitement; "at last my poor boy will be avenged."

"At last," replied Neil Bathurst, gravely, "many wrongs will be righted. Mrs. Arteveldt, if it were discovered that another, and not Miss Armyn, had killed your son, would you hate that other as bitterly as you do her?"

"What do you mean, Neil Bathurst?" she exclaimed almost fiercely. "Oh, is it true, then? Are you seeking to screen—to save that girl?"

"No, madam. What the man who has visited you of late would have you believe is not true, except the one statement that I rescued Miss Armyn from him. That man is an assassin. He tried to murder Miss Armyn!"

Mrs. Arteveldt started back in surprise, and some confusion.

"Who told you about him?" she asked. "How do you know?"

"I have many ways of finding out things," replied he, smiling slightly. "Are you ready to hear my statement now, madam?"

"Yes. Go on!"

"Mr. Hale here knows everything; he will give you all the particulars. My duty is simply to state the truth concerning Miss Armyn."

"The truth!" bitterly. "Well, tell me the truth about this murderess."

"The truth concerning Miss Armyn is briefly this," said Neil, not noticing her sarcasm. "She went from your son's house in a mysterious carriage that drove away just at the time of her disappearance, and that could never be traced, for the simple reason that it was driven by no hireling, but by Doctor Austin, the guardian of Miss Armyn. Doctor Austin took her straight to the asylum of Doctor Burton, and there, as you know, she remained until my visit scared her away. Now, there was a secret in her life, and in the life of her mother, and, on her death-bed, that mother had exacted a promise, a vow, that she, Lenore, would guard her own life carefully, and guard this secret as well; to this end she must promise to avoid all detectives and curious persons, and, most of all, this villain, who tells you that I rescued the girl from his hands. Your son pointed me out to her, and she knew that I was a detective. I believed myself unknown to her, and so visited the hospital without disguise, thus defeating myself. She saw me, recognized me, and fled from me. At this time, Mrs. Arteveldt, she did not even know that your son was dead."

"What!" cried Mrs. Arteveldt. "Dare you say that to me, sir? If you wish to be heard do not advocate the cause of my son's murderess. Ah, her witch-like beauty has turned your head, as it did the head of my poor boy!"

The detective's fine face flushed hotly, and then the look came into his eyes that betokened an uprising of his strong will.

"Madam!" he said sternly, and bending upon her a look that caused her to lower her own angry orbs, "allow me to say what I wish to say; after which I will listen to any comments you may choose to make. I repeat that Lenore Armyn's strange conduct, that looked so much like guilt, was not guilt. She fled from me because she had promised her mother to avoid all pursuers, and she had strong reason to fear pursuit. Innocent of any crime, she has been doubly hunted, doubly wronged. I repeat it, until after she fled from the asylum she did not know that your son was dead. She had feared me, and all detectives; she had feared your informer, Jason Bradwardine, and, most of all, she had feared your son. She is a

woman in a thousand ; or, when she suddenly came upon the paper containing the account of the murder, publishing her as the murderess, and setting a price upon her head, she must have gone mad."

Mrs. Arteveldt had with difficulty controlled herself thus far ; now she fairly shrieked,

"So you are all combined against me. You would let this murderess go. Do you think I will permit it? No, my son *shall* be avenged ; his murderess shall expiate her crime ! "

"Mrs. Arteveldt " (it was Mr. Hale's cool voice that interposed), "your son's murderess will expiate her crime ; she is now a prisoner."

Mrs. Arteveldt reeled as if about to fall, and finally sank back in her chair, murmuring faintly : "What !—what are you telling me ?—why talk of her innocence ? "

Kate Seaton came quietly to her side, and placed a cool hand on her throbbing forehead.

"Madam," she said softly, "you do not understand ; the murderess is found, but it is not Lenore Armyn."

Mrs. Arteveldt started. She turned her eyes again towards Neil Bathurst.

"What does it mean—what are you trying to do ? " she gasped. "Oh, you said you would find the creature who killed my boy ! "

"And I have found her, madam," said Neil, more gently than he had previously spoken. "She was arrested last night. You must compose yourself ; you must prepare yourself for a great shock. Your son's bride did not shed his blood. Shall I tell you who did ? "

"Yes," faintly.

"Your son was murdered by the woman we have all known as Aura Durand."

"Hear him ! " fairly shrieked the frantic woman, turning towards the lawyer. "Hear whom he accuses ; ah ! who will tell me the truth ? "

"I will !" replied the lawyer, firmly. "Madam, if you do not listen and control yourself, we must leave you to find this out from the daily papers. I tell you that Aura Durand is the murderess—she has confessed her crime."

Slowly, and with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets, Mrs. Arteveldt arose to her feet. Then, with a sudden and piercing shriek, she threw out her hands and fell at the very feet of the detective. He lifted her from the floor and carried her to a soft couch in the rear drawing-room. Then Kate and the housekeeper applied restoratives ; but when Mrs. Arteveldt recovered from her swoon, she turned her face towards Neil Bathurst, and then broke out in a violent fit of hysterics.

This was too much for the good lawyer. "Confusion ! " he exclaimed, turning wrathfully away. "Was ever absurdity like the absurdity of woman. She is angry because this girl did not kill her son. I'll wager she would hang Lenore Armyn, and let Aura Durand go, to-morrow, if she had the power. Come along, Mr. Bathurst, we will leave her to come to her senses."

But Kate Seaton interposed.

"Don't go, I beg, Mr. Hale," she said, with a look half serious, half amused. "If you leave her now, you will have to begin from the foundation. You have said truly, her hatred for Lenore is intense. I don't know what she will do when she learns that Lenore is not only innocent, but an heiress and a lady of rank : " then turning to Bathurst, "Tell him to stay, Mr. Bathurst ; see how obstinate he looks. He is in exactly the mood now to bring her to reason quickly."

Neil laughed involuntarily.

"I do think he should stay," he said, "and I think that I should go. Until she is convinced of the truth, my presence will only excite her ; thanks, once more, to Jason Bradwardine. Don't you think I am right, Miss Seaton ? "

"Yes ; I think you are. If you stay she will only say bitter things to you, and have so much more to repent of when she comes to her senses."

"Exactly my idea, although, of course, I should not bear malice. But I want to see Mr. Durand this evening, and he needs my presence more than it is needed here."

Mr. Hale was somewhat inclined to take his hat and go too, but, after a little more low-toned discussion, he decided to remain and "have it out," as he expressed it, at the same moment flinging himself down upon a very forbidding-looking chair, to wait for the hysterics to abate.

Bathurst exchanged with him a few half-whispered words, in reference to their plans for the morrow, and then he turned to go, Kate Seaton accompanying him through the drawing-rooms and pausing at the door.

"Mr. Bathurst," she asked, looking up with a rosy flush on her face, "will they take Aura Durand to London ? "

"Yes, Miss Seaton," looking down with a smile ; "as soon as the necessary preliminary steps have been taken, Rob will sail for England with his prisoner."

Kate looked down. "I wonder if Mr. Ferrars will go too ? " she said, as if she didn't feel so much interested in this question.

"No; not if I can prevent it."

"And, when he does go, he will take Lenore, I suppose?"

Neil flushed in his turn, and made no answer. He was almost startled to find himself mentally saying, "I wish I could prevent that."

"Lenore will go back to my sister now," went on Kate; "she said so to-day. And I shall go home too. Mrs. Arteveldt will not want me when she learns how, all along, I have been in sympathy with Lenore"—then veering suddenly, in true woman fashion,—"how splendidly you all took those counterfeiters, Mr. Bathurst!"

"Yes. That was Rob's work; I had little hand in it. Ferrars made the acquaintance of the cook, and so managed to let Rob in, you know. He got upstairs without being seen, and had the trap open and everything ready before the gang came up, to begin work. Rob won't much fancy this trip across the water, just now. But I must go, Miss Seaton. Mr. Durand has a lonely house to-night, and, for the present, I have promised to take up my quarters there."

Kate gave him her hand, and said good-night, and then the young detective set out to walk to Mr. Durand's strangely deserted dwelling. The night was dark and windy, and Neil paused upon the doorstep to button up his coat—paused where the light from the street lamp fell full upon his face. Then he ran lightly down the steps and walked away, thinking of beautiful Lenore Armyn, as he had first seen her, holding the poison to her lips, and face to face with death.

On he paced, lost in thought, and through the darkness a stealthy shadow glided after, drawing silently nearer and nearer as they approached the avenue where the stately dwellings of the rich stood in their own grounds, and wide apart, and where the leafless trunks and branches of great shade-trees threw deepest shadow. Nearer and nearer draws the noiseless, stealthy, vengeful shadow, and still Neil Bathurst paces on, with buoyant step and thoughts far away.

And now the shadow is close upon him! He is midway between the street lamps, and passing a darkened dwelling, passing directly under the gnarled branches of two great trees, that stretch their arms out over the pavement. Under these branches the shadow glides, and, if it makes a sound, the howling wind bears that sound away.

Close! closer yet!—there is not the length of an arm between the shadow and the unconscious Neil. And now something long, and slender, and bright, gleams in an uplifted hand.

"Neil!"

Suddenly Neil Bathurst faces about; he sees the gleaming knife; he sees a form swiftly, with one bound, interposed between that knife and his heart. The knife descends; the form reels; there is a groan, a fall, and Neil Bathurst knows that some life has been offered to save his.

All this in a second of time. In the next second, with a panther-like spring, Bathurst is upon the assassin. There is a flash, a report, and Jason Bradwardine falls, his brains scattered upon the pavement, the bloody knife tightly clutched in his hand, his career of crime ended.

Flinging his smoking pistol down, Bathurst kneels beside his prostrate and bleeding good angel. Gently he lifts the head, and then a cry escapes his lips: "My God! It is Ferrars!"

He hears voices and hurrying footsteps, but it seems an age to him before help comes; then he will give his place up to none other. They raise the prostrate, senseless form, and carry it, as Neil Bathurst directs, to the house of Mr. Durand, only a block away. When they have placed him upon a bed, and a physician has been summoned, Neil Bathurst turns to the officer, who has accompanied them, and answers his questions.

"It is Francis Ferrars, a London detective. He came between me and that villain's knife. Did I kill him?"

"Spilled his brains all over," is the officer's answer.

"I am glad of it. I meant to. If he has killed Ferrars, I shall regret that he had not a dozen lives."

Then he turns again to the bedside, and Mr. Durand is left to explain to the officer the identity of Bathurst, and the character of the man who lies out on the pavement a block away, ghastly, mutilated, dead, and surrounded by a crowd of curious, unpitying, sensation hunters.

But Francis Ferrars did not die; the life so brave and useful was not destined to be blotted out by the dagger stroke of a coward. For days he hovered between life and death; and, day and night, Neil Bathurst was beside him, pale, anxious, sick at heart, until the danger was over. Francis Ferrars was a stranger in a strange land, but no wounded and suffering one was ever yet more tenderly cared for, more carefully guarded, or more anxiously watched over. This lonely, sad-eyed man found himself surrounded by father, brothers, sisters, friends. Mr. Durand

watched over him with the utmost solicitude, and could not do enough for the welfare of a guest he so honoured. No brotherly devotion could exceed that of Neil Bathurst and Rob Jocelyn ; and every day came two fair girls, with sad and anxious faces, who whispered softly with Mrs. Richards, and hovered about the door of the sick room like pitiful guardian angels. When the crisis was past, and they were allowed to enter the sick chamber, they came every day to sit beside the wounded hero, and minister to him with tender hands.

Since he had learned from Kate Seaton that Jason Bradwardine was on the watch for Neil Bathurst, Francis Ferrars had in his turn watched Jason Bradwardine, especially when his brother detective paid a visit to the house of Mrs. Arteveldt. On this night, when Neil sallied forth alone, Ferrars had been, as usual, near at hand. He had not kept so near his game as he would have done had he known that Neil would come forth unaccompanied, and the would-be assassin had well nigh accomplished his purpose before the Englishman could hurl himself between his friend and the murderous knife.

One day Lenore and Neil had been sitting beside the sick man ; Lenore had been, as she ever was, wonderfully tender, and anxious for his comfort. "The doctor says you may eat fruit," she said, bending over Ferrars ; "lots of fruit. There are grapes in the market, such luscious ones ; think of them. I will bring you some directly. Will you eat them? Promise, now."

He smiled feebly, and gave the required promise, and Lenore flitted from the room. Then Ferrars beckoned to Neil to come nearer, and that young man complied, and in his turn bent above the couch.

"I am going to tell you something," said Ferrars, feebly. "I have watched your face and hers, when you thought me asleep. You think Lenore cares for me a little, and so thinking you would never tell your own secret. So, for your sake, and for hers, I must tell you mine. The secret that has set the shadow on my face, and made me what I shall be to my last day, a solitary, homeless man. Lenore *does* care for me a little, I think, for blood is thicker than water, after all ; and the same blood, the blood of the Massingers, flows in her veins and in mine ; but between us is the bar-sinister. My father was Sir Hillary Massinger's younger brother. My mother—an English peasant girl. No one knows my secret ; as you may guess, I am not proud of my Massinger blood. I call myself a child of the people."

There was the sound of a stifled sob behind them, and, turning quickly, Neil saw Lenore standing near, with a basket of white grapes in her hand and pitiful tears in her eyes. As he moved aside, she came quickly to the bed, and, sinking down in her old place, took the hand of Francis Ferrars in both her own.

"Forgive me," she murmured. "I have heard it, and I am so glad—so glad to have found a relative in you—one that I can respect and love. It makes me more resigned to my English blood."

Francis Ferrars closed his eyes for a moment, as if in pain. Then they opened and smiled into hers.

"Blood is thicker than water," he murmured. "I never meant this to come to your knowledge. But you know now how strong was my reason for wishing to see one wrong, done in part by a Massinger, righted, and why, too, I should so much desire to thwart Jason Bradwardine and keep him from the succession. But Sir Hillary must not know. I do not desire his patronage, and he would never permit me to approach you as a friend."

"Would he not?" her eyes flashing. "Then Sir Hillary had better look for the next Bradwardine. If he accepts me as his heiress, he will take me on my own terms ; and if you discard me, I'll have nothing whatever to do with Sir Hillary Massinger. I'll go back to Doctor Burton, or Doctor Austin, or," with a side glance at Neil, "Mrs. Harris ; and Mr. Bathurst won't hunt me up again—he has said so."

"And I mean it too," declared Neil, with such vigour that they both laughed.

"It's a fortunate thing for me that I found this out," went on Lenore, in a livelier tone. "You see that officious Mr. Bathurst had forestalled me, and Mrs. Richards had the grapes all ready ; that's how I happened back. Doctor Austin wants to get rid of me ; he says I am too uncertain to please him. I shall elect you my guardian. Your hair is not quite grey enough, but I think I can manage that ; don't you, Mr. Bathurst?"

"Yes," retorted Neil, maliciously ; "I am sure you can, if you don't give up those seven-league boots."

And the eyes of the sick man were a shade less sad, and there was a glad throb at his heart as he looked from one bright face to the other and thought :

"They are my friends for always ; in spite of the bar-sinister, I can keep Sir Hillary Massinger's heiress my friend."

CHAPTER LIV.

AT LAST.

WHEN the chase is over, the tempest passed, the billows tranquil, the ship in safe harbour, and the sails furled, we desert the decks, to rest and make ready for a new voyage.

Our story is done ; we have brought the actors in our drama into safe ports—if there be a safe port on this side the viewless line that bounds eternity. There is nothing left unsaid that the reader cannot guess as well.

We might tell how, one day, two months after the glad tidings that his heiress was found crossed the ocean to Sir Hillary Massinger, a tall, spare form appeared at the door of the Ruthvens, and demanded his grandchild, Lady Lenore Massinger ; and how Francis Ferrars, still confined to an invalid's couch, acted as mediator between the haughty but penitent old man and the still more haughty young lady, who would only "be a Massinger on her own terms." We might tell how Lenore, in spite of her stubborn will, learned first to pity and then to love this old man, whose pride had wrecked first his son's life and then his own ; and how, again and again, her republican sentiments and republican friendships shocked the old nobleman, until his love for her, and her arguments, that were a shrewd mingling of bravely spoken common sense and pretty, wheedling nonsense, gained the day, and he extended the hand of friendship, not of patronage, to all who had been the friends of Lady Lenore in her time of need.

Like many an imperious and strong-willed one, Sir Hillary had journeyed through life, bending and swaying and ruling all about him, until, at last, he had enocuntered a pride as obstinate and a will (albeit, it was the will of a young girl) stronger than his own. What he could not master he submitted to, and, as Rob Jocelyn expressed it, "put his blue blood in his pocket."

Rob had delayed his journey as much as he could, because of the uncertainty of life or death that, for a little time, hung over Francis Ferrars. But justice must have her dues, and the captured murderess was an uncomfortable prisoner to have on hand, so at last he sailed away, declaring publicly, that is, to Neil, Lenore, and the others, that he went reluctantly, because of "poor Ferrars ;" and whispering privately in the ear of Kate Seaton another reason why he was loth to leave America,—a reason that brought blushes to Kate's fair cheek, and a glad light to her eyes. At last he sailed, taking the soft-voiced, fair-faced, tigress-hearted Elise Schwartz back to England, and to the doom that awaited her there. Those were dangerous days, that were passed by Neil and Lenore beside the couch of Francis Ferrars—dangerous to their peace of mind—and Kate Seaton, looking on, rejoiced, and secretly informed Mrs. Ruthven that another triumph was in store for republicanism, and another downfall for Sir Hillary.

Mr. Durand, after all, had little room for gloomy reflections. His wife returned to him restored to health, and to find, installed as guests in her house, Neil Bathurst, whom she admired exceedingly, and Francis Ferrars, who proved a god-send to her, giving her the opportunity that her soul loved, of fussing about a sick room, and of preparing more dainties and delicacies to tempt the appetite than would have sufficed for a dozen sick men.

When Sir Hillary came, he, too, after a week's sojourn at a hotel, became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Durand, and Lenore and Kate were often at their dinner-table.

Mrs. Arteveldt was finally convinced, very much against her will, that she had no just cause to harbour enmity against Lenore. It was a terrible shock to her to learn that Aura, who had been her pet and favourite, in private and public, was an adventuress and a doubly-dyed murderess ; but having convinced her of this—at the expense of a terrific strain upon his own equanimity—Mr. Hale found it comparatively easy to persuade her that it were best to let Elise Schwartz go, to be punished in England, and to let the memory of Clarence Arteveldt rest, and not drag to light all his faults and foibles, that might by unprejudiced ones be called by harsher names still. The reward offered for the finding of the murderess was promptly paid ; but Mrs. Arteveldt never renewed the subject of making Neil Bathurst her sole heir. However, her attachment to Kate Seaton survived her chagrin at losing her, and when, not long after the arrest of Elise Schwartz, she summoned Mr. Hale to draw up her will, in which she bequeathed the larger portion of her wealth to divers charities, she reserved a handsome sum to be given to Kate, as a marriage portion ; and another handsome sum to revert to this same young lady, at her death.

Doctor Austin was the most jovial of men in these days ; he never tired of telling how he had rushed in hot haste to Doctor Burton's private asylum, to find Lenore gone ; and when, one fine spring day,

Lenore, Kate, Neil and Doctor Austin drove out to Doctor Burton's to dine with him, that worthy custodian of the mentally afflicted exclaimed, in high glee,

"Bless my soul! but this is the jolliest day I ever experienced. To think that Miss Lee is a lady of rank, and that she was not insane at all! Bless—my—soul!"

To which Doctor Austin responded,

"And to think that this young dog," meaning Neil, "tried to claim relationship, and studied my musty old books for three months. And he warned me to beware of *detectives*, or any other sort of *confidence men*; ha! ha! ha!"

George Fordham recovered from his pistol wound, and, together with his gentlemanly gang, went to learn some useful and legitimate trade, in safe seclusion. Nina Annin shared their fate; but, doubtless, she will be at large in a few years, at the most, for she is a handsome woman, and believed to have been led into dark ways through her love for Fordham. For it is only known to Ferrars and Bathurst that she is Mrs. Pomeroy, the wife and accomplice of a notorious English burglar and counterfeiter, who was shot while resisting the officers of the law, and that she, herself, wounded two officers in making her escape at the time of her husband's death. The opals and the diamond ring given her by Aura, or Elise, and which were a part of the booty brought by Elise from the old Jew's coffers, she returned to the collection which Rob took with him to England and restored to the Crown.

Mrs. Richards never resumed her old life; after a time she confided her story, a sad but very common one, to Mrs. Durand; and that good woman, who had given a daughter's place to a far greater sinner, bade her remain, acting as her housekeeper, as before, and so, surrounded by safeguards, and very grateful to Neil Bathurst, Mrs. Richards remains, protected and happy.

Down at the Morgue, on the day after the stabbing of Francis Ferrars, a tall, dark-faced form lay stretched out; the head was disfigured and blood-stained, and the face scarce recognizable. No one came to claim it, and it was given a pauper burial; yet this man had aspired to be a peer of England. So ended, and justly too, the career of the villain Jason Bradwardine.

Mrs. Harris would not have been Mrs. Harris had she not contrived to discover the identity and whereabouts of Lenore, and to present herself as an object for favourable consideration forthwith. But, not feeling especially indebted to the lady, and not considering her a desirable acquaintance, Lenore speedily settled her claims by bestowing upon her a generous gift of money, and then assuring her that henceforth they were strangers.

Gentleman Jeff is a gambler still; but he still numbers Lenore, Kate, the three detectives, Mr. Durand, Dr. Austin, Mr. Hale, and even Sir Hillary, among his friends, and he still possesses those qualities that are lacking in many men who boast of an honourable calling, chivalry, generosity, high courtesy, and a profound respect for all good women.

Mr. Durand is without an heir, but it is whispered that the quondam Charles Durand, the man who saved his wife from the poisoner, and who drove the serpent from his threshold, will one day inherit his wealth. But Neil thinks not, cares not, for this. He is absorbed in a brighter, better dream.

And so let us leave them. Let us leave Kate Seaton looking forward with joyful anticipation to the return of her lover, the gallant Rob.

Let us leave Francis Ferrars coming back to health and strength, surrounded by friends and rejoicing in the regard of Lenore and his brother detectives.

Let us leave Neil and Lenore absorbed in their dream of happiness; a dream that we, knowing Lenore, feel well assured will not be shattered, as was the love dream of her parents, by the hand of a Judas, or the pride of birth.

The Spring wears on to Summer, the Summer of nature, and the Summer of their lives, and sometimes, in these days, when Lenore hears, or reads, of the gallant deeds of brave detectives, she thinks, with a sigh and a smile, of the time when she was "Shadowed by Three."

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